

# Strategy as staged performance: A critical discursive perspective on keynote speeches as a genre of strategic communication

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**Research Summary:** In this article, we explore how keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication. In our critical discursive analysis of video data on Apple Inc.'s keynote speeches, we demonstrate how keynote speeches are multimodally accomplished through the embodied enactment of four discursive practices: referencing, relating, demarcating, and mystifying. We show how different bodily movements, which we describe as leveling and leaping gestures, systematically contribute to constructing different conceptions of strategy through the enactment of these discursive practices as a staged genre of strategic communication. Our findings contribute to strategy-as-practice research by extending the nascent but growing literature on genres of strategic communication, the strategist's body in the strategy process, and the use of video-based research methods.

**Managerial Summary:** Firms increasingly rely on keynote speeches to communicate their strategies. As a result, managers invest more and more time and effort into preparing and rehearsing their keynote speeches. But how do managers communicate strategy in these staged performances? Based on an analysis of Apple Inc.'s keynote speeches, we explore the discursive and bodily patterns that characterize this genre. In doing so, we demonstrate that the coordinated use of bodily movements in keynote speeches is consequential for highlighting different aspects of the communicated strategy. This shows that keynote speeches and other types of public speeches cannot simply be scripted, but require managers to engage in bodily rehearsal and training in order to communicate strategies effectively.

**KEY WORDS**

critical discursive analysis, genre of strategic communication, multimodality, strategy as practice, video methods

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The burgeoning research on discourse in the strategy process in the strategy-as-practice field (Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere, & Vaara, 2014; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) has led to a re-appreciation of Burgelman's (2002) observation that a significant part of strategy work consists of "strategy by speech." That is, firms increasingly stage large-scale events to articulate, raise awareness of, disseminate, rationalize, and mobilize internal and external support for their strategy (Whittington, Yakis-Douglas, & Ahn, 2016). As a result, strategists invest more and more time in preparing the enactment of staged genres of strategic communication, that is, institutionalized ways of communicating a firm's strategy that come into being through the embodied enactment of discursive practices (Biehl-Missal, 2011). One important staged genre of strategic communication is the "keynote speech," an institutionalized means of communication that strategists instrumentally enact to unobtrusively construct and manipulate conceptions of a firm's strategy for larger audiences (e.g., Biehl-Missal, 2011; Boje, Rosile, Durant, & Luhman, 2004). Partly because of their subtle manipulative power, keynote speeches have become one of the most widely enacted staged genres of strategic communication (Schreyögg & Höpfl, 2004).

The nascent literature on genres of strategic communication in the strategy-as-practice field, however, focuses largely on exploring the discursive features of document-based genres of strategic communication. Such features relate to strategic plans (Vaara, Sorsa, & Pälli, 2010) and PowerPoint (Kaplan, 2011), among others. Therefore, although a growing literature points to the significance of the body in enacting discursive practices in the strategy process (e.g., Balogun, Best, & Lê, 2015; Gylfe, Franck, Lebaron, & Mantere, 2016), we know little about the discursive and bodily activities and practices through which staged genres of strategic communication come into being (Balogun et al., 2014). Hence, a blind spot remains around how keynote speeches are produced and re-created as a staged genre of strategic communication (Biehl-Missal, 2011; Schreyögg & Höpfl, 2004).

This article addresses this blind spot by exploring how keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication. We begin by highlighting the gaps in understanding of the discursive and bodily activities and practices through which staged genres of strategic communication, in general, and keynote speeches, in particular, are produced and re-created. We then draw from critical discursive analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 2003) to examine video recordings of Apple Inc.'s keynote speeches. Our analysis highlights the tight interplay of talk and bodily movements through which keynote speakers construct and manipulate conceptions of strategy. Specifically, we show how the enactment of four discursive practices through different bodily movements systematically contributes to constructing different conceptions of strategy by foregrounding and highlighting their familiar or novel aspects, and in doing so, produces and re-creates keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication. Based on these findings, we develop a framework that

conceptualizes how keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication and discuss the contributions of this framework to strategy-as-practice research.

Our study extends works on the discursive features of document-based genres of strategic communication (e.g., Vaara et al., 2010) by exploring the multimodal accomplishment of the under-researched genre of keynote speeches and their power effects. Furthermore, our findings specify the important role of the strategist's body in the strategy process (e.g., Gylfe et al., 2016) by providing a more nuanced understanding of how the strategist's body becomes relevant therein. Our study also expands the methodological repertoire of strategy-as-practice research (e.g., Vesa & Vaara, 2014) by showing how the systematic video analysis of talk and bodily movements enables scholars to explore multimodal patterns that are not accessible when using more conventional data. Taken together, our study contributes to expanding the strategy-as-practice research agenda beyond focusing mainly on discourse (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) by devoting more systematic attention to and conceptualizing multimodal aspects of strategy-making.

## 2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 | Strategy as practice

Strategy as practice is a stream of research that conceives of strategy as a situated activity, that is, as something that actors "do" instead of a property that firms "have" (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007). This stream builds on and extends the strategy process literature (e.g., Burgelman, 1983; Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000; Heimeriks, Bingham, & Laamanen, 2015; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), which also "look[s] at what [strategists] do" (Burgelman, 2002, p. 65), by exploring the myriad of specific practices through which "the world of strategy [is] created and re-created" (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2015, p. 8). *Practice*, broadly defined, refers to "accepted ways of doing things, embodied and materially mediated, that are shared between actors and routinized over time" (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 287). Thus, while a practice partially consists of discursive aspects, it is also "the product of training the body in a certain way [and] can be understood as the regular, skilful 'performance' of (human) bodies" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 251). Therefore, taking the notion of "practice" seriously means giving focused attention not only to discursive, but also bodily aspects of strategy-making (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

The literature on strategy as practice, however, largely focuses on exploring the discursive aspects of strategy-making (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). In line with the broader strategy-as-practice agenda, many scholars in this stream of research have explored the discursive practices, that is, how actors communicate (Maguire & Hardy, 2013), through which subjects and objects in the strategy process come into being. Such practices relate to the discursive construction of identities (Dameron & Torset, 2014), forms of strategizing (Mantere & Vaara, 2008), power positions (Laine & Vaara, 2007), risk (Maguire & Hardy, 2013), strategic direction (Samra-Fredericks, 2003), strategy tools (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015), understandings of strategy (Mantere, 2013; Paroutis & Heracleous, 2013), strategic initiatives (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014), and strategic moves (Vaara, Kleymann, & Seristö, 2004; Vaara, Tienari, & Laurila, 2006), among others. For instance, Mirabeau and Maguire (2014) showed that frontline and middle managers enact "practices of strategy articulation" to mobilize support for novel conceptions of strategy—that is, understandings of a "product-market concept" that reflects a firm's priorities with regard to the products and services it offers and the markets it targets (Burgelman, 1983, 2002)—in part, by constructing them in familiar terms. Thus, they showed that strategic communication essentially involves constructing conceptions of

strategy by foregrounding not only the novel, but also the familiar aspects of a firm's product-market concept to mobilize support for it (see also Barry & Elmes, 1997; Burgelman, 2002; Kahl & Grodal, 2016). In this regard, this study reflects the stream's overarching interest in "the performative power of discourse" (Balogun et al., 2014, p. 177) in its subtle and unobtrusive form; that is, the enactment of discursive practices that creates and re-creates meaning around subjects and objects in the strategy process and, in doing so, "define[s] reality for others" (Hardy, 1985, p. 391).

While these studies have demonstrated the relevance of discursive practices in the strategy process, mounting calls to extend this line of research by giving more focused consideration to the bodily aspects of strategy-making (e.g., Balogun et al., 2014; Gylfe et al., 2016; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) indicate that "a focus on discourse alone provides only partial understandings of how strategic work takes place" (Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015, p. S27). In response, recent works have begun to explore the relevance of the strategist's body in the strategy process. For instance, Balogun et al. (2015) showed that frontline workers contribute to realizing their firm's strategy by coordinating verbal and bodily expressions in interactions with consumers. Liu and Maitlis (2014) showed that emotions displayed through bodily movements are associated with the ways in which managers make strategy in team meetings. Gylfe et al. (2016) showed that strategists support top-down and bottom-up strategy-making by enacting distinct bundles of gestures and other bodily movements. These studies indicate that the talk that is produced through the enactment of discursive practices is aligned with, and cannot be disconnected from, gestures and other bodily movements (Streeck, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2011). However, despite the mounting evidence of the importance of the body in the strategy process, very few works have studied the bodily aspects of enacting discursive practices in the strategy process. Therefore, we still know little about the role of the strategist's body in constructing conceptions of strategy in the strategy process (Gylfe et al., 2016; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

In part, this gap may result from a general lack of understanding of genres of strategic communication and the discursive and bodily activities and practices through which they are produced and re-created (Balogun et al., 2014). Genres of strategic communication refer to "different ways of (inter)acting discoursally" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26) through which actors accomplish their work in the strategy process (Balogun et al., 2014), such as strategic plans (Vaara et al., 2010), PowerPoint (Kaplan, 2011), and public speeches (Whittington et al., 2016). The few works that have begun to examine genres of strategic communication have mostly focused on document-based genres. For example, Vaara et al. (2010) examined the discursive features and micro-processes that constitute strategic plans as a genre of strategic communication and demonstrated the power effects in strategy-making that these discursive features imply. In turn, Kaplan (2011) showed how the PowerPoint genre both enables and constrains strategy-making through enacting the discursive practices of "collaboration" and "cartography." Schoeneborn (2013) showed the different ways in which consultants enact the PowerPoint genre to fulfill its contradictory purposes of presentation and documentation.

While these works have begun to explore the myriad of genres in the strategy process (Balogun et al., 2014) by providing insights into the discursive features of document-based genres of strategic communication, the discursive and bodily activities and practices through which "staged" genres of strategic communication come into being have received much less attention (Biehl-Missal, 2011; Whittington et al., 2016). Staged genres of strategic communication are carefully prepared ways of communicating a firm's strategy to an audience that come into being through "staged performances," that is, the embodied enactment of discursive practices (Biehl-Missal, 2011). In recent years, enacting staged genres of strategic communication—such as analyst meetings, annual

general meetings, and press conferences—to articulate, raise awareness of, disseminate, rationalize, and mobilize support for a firm's strategy has become a central part of strategy work (Burgelman, 2002). To this end, managers invest more and more time and effort into preparing and rehearsing the skillful enactment of the staged performances that constitute and re-create staged genres of strategic communication, and spend substantial parts of their communication budgets on staging a firm's strategy (Biehl-Missal, 2011). Accordingly, staged genres of strategic communication have become "mass spectacles" (Biehl-Missal, 2011, p. 621), that is, staged performances that managers meticulously prepare and instrumentally enact to persuasively communicate a firm's strategy to large audiences. Thus, enacting staged genres of strategic communication "serves the reproduction of power [in that it] casts the public in the role of passive spectators" (Boje et al., 2004, pp. 751, 754) and constructs and defines social reality for audiences (Biehl-Missal, 2011). The manipulative character of staged genres of strategic communication has long been acknowledged (e.g., Goffman, 1959); however, we still know very little about the discursive and bodily activities and practices through which these manipulative genres come into being (Biehl-Missal, 2011).

This article focuses on exploring the embodied enactment of discursive practices that constitutes and re-creates the genre of keynote speeches. Keynote speeches are a staged genre of strategic communication through which managers construct conceptions of strategy by presenting and foregrounding aspects of products and services and/or their target markets as part of a firm's product-market concept. In recent years, managers have increasingly enacted this genre to construct conceptions of strategy (Schreyögg & Höpfl, 2004). As keynote speeches are usually broadcast live on the Internet, enacting this genre can instantaneously provide access to a large and diverse audience, including customers, suppliers, employees, investors, and journalists, and contributes to institutionalizing conceptions of a firm's strategy by attracting broad press coverage. In this vein, keynote speeches belong to a category of mass spectacles that were "reinvented in high-tech media to keep the masses in spectacle illusion" (Boje et al., 2004, p. 754): Keynote speeches may seem information-poor at times, but they are consequential in that managers instrumentally use them to construct conceptions of a firm's strategy for their audiences (Schreyögg & Höpfl, 2004; see also Whittington et al., 2016). Yet, the discursive and bodily activities and practices that constitute and re-create this manipulative genre remain poorly understood (Biehl-Missal, 2011).

## 2.2 | Keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication: a critical discursive perspective

We will draw from critical discursive analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Kahl & Grodal, 2016; Vaara, 2015) to examine the discursive and bodily activities and practices that produce and reproduce keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication. This methodological approach enables scholars to gain insights into the subtle enactment of discursive practices through which social reality, in general, and conceptions of strategy, in particular, are constructed (Balogun et al., 2014; Fairclough, 2003). By turning our attention to and unveiling these dynamics, "which easily pass unnoticed with more traditional approaches" (Vaara et al., 2006, p. 790), this approach allows us to "better map out and understand the role of discursive practices in the micro-level processes and activities constituting strategies and strategizing in contemporary organizations" (Vaara, 2015, p. 491).

Critical discursive analysis comprises several approaches (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997); here, we draw from the approach developed by Fairclough (1992, 2003). A central tenet of this approach is that "language is an irreducible part of social life" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). Discourses are conceived not as mere representations of social reality, but as "ways of representing aspects of the

world" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124). From this perspective, discursive practices possess "ontological power" (Laine & Vaara, 2007, p. 35); that is, they construct social reality by giving voice to some of its aspects while silencing others (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Thus, this approach is especially interested in the "'constitutive' or 'performative' effect of discourse" (Mantere & Vaara, 2008, p. 343), that is, the enactment of discursive practices through which subjects and objects in the strategy process are produced and re-created.

Fairclough's (2003) version of critical discursive analysis coincides with interpretivist approaches to discourse analysis in these aspects (Heracleous, 2006). Yet, it is grounded in critical realist assumptions (Fairclough, 2005) that "are distinctively different" (Vaara, 2015, p. 492) in several ways. Importantly, discursive practices are not considered as neutral, but as "the instrument of power" (van Leeuwen, 1993, p. 193) that actors use to "skew social reality" (Heracleous, 2006, p. 14). Therefore, critical discursive studies are particularly interested in scrutinizing the subtle discursive practices that actors enact to "manag[e] the minds of others" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). Furthermore, discourse is viewed as just *one* key aspect of social life, in general (Fairclough, 2003), and of strategic practices, in particular (Mantere & Vaara, 2008). Therefore, Fairclough's (2003) approach stresses that to understand how actors enact discursive practices requires a simultaneous analysis of text (specific textual details), discursive practice (ways of producing and interpreting texts), and social practice (the employment of contextual, i.e., bodily and other resources) (see also Vaara & Tienari, 2008).

One powerful aspect of critical discursive analyses is the exploration of genres (Fairclough, 2003). From a critical discursive perspective, genres and their power effects unfold as "institutionalized conventions" (Balogun et al., 2014, p. 185) that are produced and re-created through the enactment of discursive practices (Fairclough, 2005). Therefore, critical discursive analysis does not limit its examination of genres to textual features, but extends it to the embodied enactment of discursive practices through which genres come into being (Fairclough, 2003). Such an analysis is particularly fruitful for the examination of the discursive and bodily activities and practices that constitute keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication: It facilitates an integrated analysis of staged performances, that is, the embodied enactment of discursive practices, that produce and re-create this power-laden genre (Balogun et al., 2014; Fairclough, 1992). Therefore, given that full-blown critical discursive studies are "theoretically helpful but empirically difficult to achieve" (Vaara, 2015, p. 492), we selectively apply critical discursive analysis by focusing on the embodied enactment of discursive practices through which the genre of keynote speeches is produced and reproduced. Specifically, we draw from critical discursive analysis to examine the following research question: How do keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication?

### 3 | METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 | Case selection

Our critical discursive analysis focuses on the keynote speeches of Apple Inc. This company relies on keynote speeches to communicate its strategy to record-breaking numbers of viewers (e.g., ScribbleLive, 2013) several times a year. Apple is widely considered to be adept at broadcasting persuasive presentations that "educate" the audience about the company's strategy (Coff, 2010), thus making the company a widely-imitated pioneer of keynote speeches that is able to "teach" social reality in an unobtrusive way. In this respect, the company's keynote speeches are a revelatory case, providing insights into the embodied enactment of discursive practices through which this

genre comes into being. Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, Apple's extensive and well-documented use of keynote speeches proved a rich source of qualitative data, which is needed for critical discursive studies (Fairclough, 2003).

We focused particularly on Apple's keynote speeches in the period from 2001 to 2011. Up to 2001, Apple had generated most of its revenues as a producer and seller of computer hardware and software. In January 2001, the company entered the music business with the introduction of iTunes, a piece of software that digitizes and manages music on computers. This was followed by the introduction of iPod, a digital music player that was seamlessly integrated with iTunes, in October 2001. In April 2003, Apple launched the iTunes Music Store, an online store for digital music that was embedded in the digital music software. In the following years, Apple substantially extended its operations in the music business by launching the iPod mini, the iPod shuffle, the iPod nano, and the iPod touch. It also introduced iPhones and iPads, which also allowed users to manage and play music, and numerous product updates that helped consumers purchase, manage, and listen to digital music. In October 2011, Apple introduced iTunes in the Cloud, a service that provides a cloud-based solution to synchronizing purchased digital music across digital devices. Thus, Apple transformed its product-market concept: From a computer company, Apple evolved into a company that trades media and digital devices. In line with Burgelman's (2002) idea of "strategy by speech," Apple constantly communicated this strategic change in persuasive keynote speeches and other genres of communication to make it "stick" in the external environment" (p. 157). Thus, such communication essentially contributed to the development of a market for paid digital music that Apple dominated for years.

### 3.2 | Data collection

While strategy-as-practice research relies largely on interview, documentary, and observational data (Vaara & Whittington, 2012), we used mainly video data (Gylfe et al., 2016; LeBaron, Jarzabkowski, Pratt, & Fetzer, forthcoming) for the purpose of our study. Video's ability to pause, replay, and zoom in greatly facilitates the "detailed analysis of strategic practices" (Vesa & Vaara, 2014, p. 289), such as the embodied enactment of discursive practices through which keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication. As video data "involve not only language, but also visual images and sound effects" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3), they render both the discursive and bodily aspects of strategic practices accessible to investigation.

To search for videos of Apple's keynote speeches, we browsed YouTube and Vimeo using the search term "Apple AND keynote." This search yielded about 1.2 million hits in total. We screened all search results by title, thumbnail, and short description. Whenever we were able to unambiguously identify a video as a full or partial recording of a keynote speech in the relevant period from 2001 to 2011, we included it in our data set by listing the date of the keynote speech and the video's title, length, and URL. In ambiguous cases, we watched the video and included the relevant ones in our data set. We did not include videos that we identified as duplicates or extracts of video recordings that we had already collected. This procedure resulted in a list of videos covering 56 keynote speeches with a total length of 75 hrs and 37 min and an average length of 1 hr and 21 min (see also Appendix S1). To facilitate the detailed examination of verbal expressions in the early stages of the analysis, we transcribed all videos. For this purpose, we complemented the transcripts with time markers, links to the video data, and notes on the setting, body language, and tone of voice.

In addition, we searched the company website for documents that related to Apple's strategic development in the period from 2001 to 2011. The documents we collected comprise 877 press releases, 121 reports, and 2 open letters. Furthermore, given Apple's strong engagement in the

music business in the focal period, we searched the websites of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for reports on developments in the music industry in this period. On these websites, we found 28 reports. Although not directly related to the focal genre, these secondary documents aided our analysis in that they helped us appraise the introduction of new products and services as an important part of the company's evolving product-market concept, extended our understanding of the products and services as well as the company's target markets, and gave us an idea of the broader context to which the keynote speeches referred.

At a later stage of our analysis, we aimed to verify the patterns that we had observed by discussing them with an insider. Due to Apple's secretive behavior (Coff, 2010), it was impossible to contact the keynote speakers directly. However, through a web search, we identified the presentation coach who had professionally coached Apple's keynote speakers since the late 1990s. Although this presentation coach would usually not talk about her/his activities at Apple, s/he gave us the exceptional opportunity to talk to her/him about our findings for two hours.

### 3.3 | Data analysis

Although "it is very difficult to report all the rereading and reinterpretation steps" (Vaara et al., 2006, p. 796) that critical discursive studies involve, we can, retrospectively, identify three main stages of our analysis that follow Fairclough's (2003) approach: an analysis of the content of the keynote speeches (text), how the texts were produced (discursive practice), and how bodily and other contextual resources were employed (social practice).

In the first stage, we began by conducting a "thematic analysis" (Vaara et al., 2006, p. 796); that is, we examined the content of the keynote speeches to determine "a discernible pattern" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 236) of the speaker's construction of conceptions of Apple's strategy through enacting this genre. During this initial stage, we relied on our transcripts, which contain the spoken words as written texts. In particular, we engaged in "a close reading" (Vaara, 2015, p. 499) of all transcripts to gain an understanding of the content of the keynote speeches. For this purpose, we drew on Burgelman's (2002) concept of corporate strategy as a "product-market concept"; specifically, we searched for instances in which the keynote speakers referred to products or services and/or target markets. In total, we found 751 of such instances. To gain a more detailed understanding of these instances, we "zoomed in" (Vaara et al., 2010, p. 689) on the texts by focusing on aspects of Apple's product-market concept that the keynote speakers either foregrounded or emphasized less. Given that "the meaning created in a particular discursive act can hardly be understood without a consideration of [...] what has been said before," we considered the keynote speeches as "chains of text" (Vaara, 2015, p. 492), and paid particular attention to how keynote speakers did or did not refer to the content of previous keynote speeches. Using this lens helped us to recognize discernible differences: In some parts of the keynote speeches, the speakers highlighted novel aspects of the product-market concept that, as they said, the audience had not experienced before (which we coded as "novel product-market concept"). In other parts, they foregrounded familiar aspects, which they assumed that the audience had experienced before (which we coded as "familiar product-market concept").

In the second stage, we examined how the texts were rendered; that is, we searched for the discursive practices that the speakers enacted to foreground familiar or novel aspects of the company's product-market concept. For this purpose, we relied on our detailed notes to code instances in the transcripts that indicated how the keynote speakers talked about a product or service and/or target markets. For this purpose, we coded the distinctive ways in which the keynote speakers

communicated Apple's strategy to the audience. The initial categories mirrored closely the wording of the keynote speakers. We then revisited all video sequences to which the coded excerpts corresponded to re-appraise how the keynote speakers constructed conceptions of Apple's strategy. Watching these video sequences repeatedly and cross-referencing our emerging findings with the related literature (e.g., Maguire & Hardy, 2013; Mantere & Vaara, 2008) helped us to recognize similarities between the categories and to subsume them under broader categories. This process of refinement left us with four types of discursive practices through which the genre of keynote speeches was produced and re-created: referencing, relating, demarcating, and mystifying. To determine whether these practices were used to construct conceptions of Apple's strategy by foregrounding only familiar or only novel aspects of the firm's product-market concept, we checked whether each of these discursive practices was systematically associated with excerpts coded as familiar or as novel by arranging the quotes in a table (see Appendix S2). However, we could not find any such relationships: Our comparison of the quotes suggested that the keynote speakers enacted the entire repertoire of discursive practices to foreground both familiar and novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept.

In the third stage, we examined more closely how the keynote speakers foregrounded either familiar or novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept using the four discursive practices in order to better understand how the practices were "enacted as genres" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 208). We focused specifically on the bodily movements enacted by the keynote speakers to support their discursive statements. We used complementary methods to examine our video data (Fairclough, 2003) for this purpose. Specifically, we used Gylfe et al.'s (2016) video method for the examination of the embodied enactment of strategic practices. This method comprises three techniques: detailing, sequencing, and patterning.

The first technique we applied was "detailing," which involves capturing bodily movements in single images and amplifying salient details so that they can be observed more closely (Gylfe et al., 2016). In practice, this meant going through all the videos to capture commonly recognizable bodily movements through which the discursive practices were enacted in the (751) coded instances. When we recognized such movements, we paused the video, made a detailed drawing of each movement, added arrows that highlighted the positions and direction that each movement involved, and assigned to each drawing an identifier and a time marker. We then compared the bodily movements that the drawings conveyed. We did so by complementing the coded quotes in our data table with the images that illustrated the corresponding gestures, grouping them according to the type of discursive practices through which the coded text was produced, while maintaining the distinction between the foregrounding of familiar or novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept (e.g., see the second and fifth image columns of Appendix S2). This enabled us to compare bodily movements through which the keynote speakers enacted the *same* discursive practice in different coded instances, and bodily movements through which the keynote speakers enacted *different* discursive practices. By beginning with the latter, we recognized that the embodied enactment of the different types of discursive practices noticeably differed; that is, there was no overarching pattern of bodily movements used by the keynote speakers to enact these practices. To gain a better understanding of these differences, we proceeded with the former, by focusing on each discursive practice and comparing the bodily movements through which the keynote speakers, respectively, enacted them. In doing so, we noticed that each discursive practice was enacted through a distinct type of gesture. Appraising the bodily movements in concert with the discursive statements that the corresponding discursive practices produced indicated that these gestures consistently illustrated the spoken word, thereby complementing and supporting the construction of conceptions of Apple's strategy.

The second technique we used was "sequencing," which captures sequences "of preparation and retraction during embodied performance" (Gylfe et al., 2016, p. 140). *Preparation and retraction*

refer to the bodily movements that introduce and conclude gestures, such as the four previously identified, and through which “behaviors are made meaningful” (Gylfe et al., 2016, p. 139). To apply “sequencing,” we went through our video data and made drawings of the preparation and retraction movements that marked the beginning and end of each identified gesture, and added arrows that indicated the position and direction of the bodily movements. Then, we complemented the drawings of identified gestures with the drawings that illustrated their preparation and retraction movements in our data table (e.g., see the first and third as well as fourth and six image columns in Appendix S2).

The third technique we applied was “patterning.” This technique involves comparing the sequences of bodily movements to search for patterns that extend beyond single sequences enacted by specific actors (Gylfe et al., 2016). Specifically, we used our data table (see Appendix S2) to look for similarities and differences between the sequences of bodily movements for each discursive practice. In doing so, we identified notable differences between the preparation and retraction movements. Specifically, when keynote speakers foregrounded familiar aspects of Apple’s product-market concept, they prepared gestures by lifting up their arms from a relaxed, hanging position and retracted gestures by letting their arms fall back into a hanging position. In contrast, when keynote speakers foregrounded novel aspects of Apple’s product-market concept, they showed stronger body tension; that is, they prepared gestures by lifting their hands from a forward-pointing position in front of the body and retracted gestures by moving back to this position. Using tabular comparisons of the preparation and retraction movements between all identified discursive practices, we noticed that this pattern was recognizable across these practices. We termed the respective preparation and retraction movements “leveling” and “leaping.”

To obtain feedback on these patterns from an insider, we talked to a presentation coach who had accompanied Apple’s keynote speakers throughout the focal period. Importantly, the coach confirmed our interpretation of the patterns we had identified. The coach explained that the speakers emulated benchmark keynote speeches and rehearsed their own speech over an extended period of time until these intentional gestures emerged naturally on stage rather than looking “robotically trained.” This indicated that the observed patterns did not emerge by accident: As the presentation coach highlighted, the keynote speakers performed a “well-rehearsed choreography” to persuasively construct conceptions of Apple’s strategy on stage.

## 4 | KEYNOTE SPEECHES AS A STAGED GENRE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Our analysis focuses on eight transcribed and annotated excerpts that illustrate how the keynote speakers highlighted the familiar and novel aspects of Apple’s product-market concept through the embodied enactment of the discursive practices through which keynote speeches are produced and re-created as a staged genre of strategic communication. To establish immediate comparability, we selected excerpts from Apple’s CEO in the focal period. As Appendix S2 illustrates, we found similar discursive and bodily patterns across different keynote speakers. Thus, although individual keynote speakers may also perform other discursive and bodily activities, we focus on those discursive and bodily patterns that characterize keynote speeches as a conventionalized form of strategic communication.

### 4.1 | Referencing

Referencing denotes the technocratic talk that Apple’s keynote speakers used in the construction of conceptions of the firm’s strategy. In virtually every keynote speech, the keynote speakers referred to statistics and other quantitative data, and cited experts to substantiate the claims they made. In

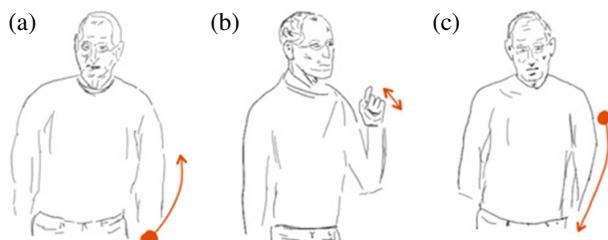
doing so, the keynote speakers highlighted and accentuated both familiar and novel aspects of the firm's product-market concept.

To illustrate how the keynote speakers foregrounded the familiar aspects of Apple's product-market concept, consider the case of the introduction of new software for iTunes and iPods, which offered support for "podcasting." This software update contributed to transforming the Apple's product-market concept, allowing the company to evolve from a notebook and music company to a media company, by enabling consumers to seamlessly create, subscribe to, download, and listen to episodic series of audio or video files that users create and distribute on the Internet. The keynote speaker began the launch of the new software by noting that the audience should be familiar with the iPod as part of Apple's evolving product-market concept:

#### Excerpt 1: Keynote 28

- 1 The iPod has really entered popular culture in America.
- 2 (*Figure 1a: The keynote speaker lifts up his left hand from a hanging position*)
- 3 You know that when you're lucky enough to get on the cover of
- 4 (*Figure 1b: The keynote speaker rhythmically moves his left hand up and down*)
- 5 *The New Yorker.* And that's reflected in iPod's sales. At the end of last quarter, at the
- 6 end of March, we'd sold about 16 million iPods.
- 7 (*Figure 1c: The keynote speaker leads his left hand back to a hanging position*)

The keynote speaker began this sequence by making the universal claim that most people in the United States seem to use an iPod ("popular culture in America;" Line 1), and thus, should be familiar with it as an essential part of Apple's product-market concept. Starting from a relaxed and unexcited body position with hanging arms (Figure 1a), he substantiated this claim by citing *The New Yorker* (Line 5), a magazine that reflects cultural life in New York City and beyond, which seemed to agree with this claim ("on the cover;" Line 3). The keynote speaker also provided quantitative proof for this claim by presenting a sales figure ("16 million iPods;" Line 6). Interestingly, the keynote speaker did not lend further verbal support to the introductory claim by putting *The New Yorker* as an expert source and the sales figure as a high number into perspective. Instead, he underlined both the magazine and the sales figure with rhythmic, vertical hand movements (Figure 1b), and in doing so, emphasized these "facts" as if they were extraordinary. The keynote speaker finished this sequence by returning his left hand to a relaxed, hanging position (Figure 1c), as if there were nothing more to discuss, given the audience's (apparent) familiarity with the iPod. Thus, in this excerpt, the relaxed and unexcited "leveling" gestures that prepared and retracted the rhythmic bodily movement contributed to foregrounding a familiar aspect of Apple's product-market concept.



**FIGURE 1** Foregrounding familiar aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of referencing

The following example of the introduction of the iPod nano as part of Apple's extended engagement in the music business demonstrates how the keynote speakers enacted referencing in order to foreground novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept. The iPod nano was a music player with flash memory that replaced the iPod mini, a portable music player that had already dominated the flash-based segment of the market for portable music players, in part due to its small size. A key feature of the new music player was that it was even smaller than the iPod mini. The keynote speaker foregrounded the size of the iPod nano as follows:

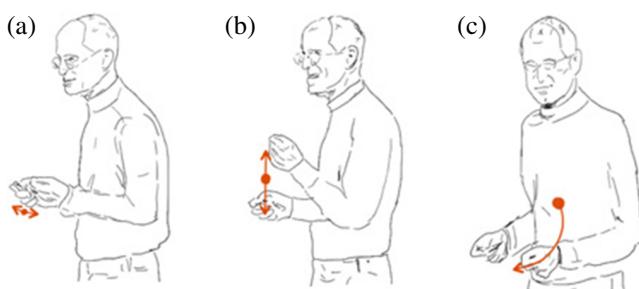
#### Excerpt 2: Keynote 29

- 1 (*Figure 2a: The keynote speaker keeps his hands in a tense position in front of his body*)
- 2 The iPod mini, an incredibly successful product. The iPod nano is
- 3 (*Figure 2b: The keynote speaker rhythmically moves his left hand up and down*)
- 4 half the thickness. It's 62% smaller in volume. That means it's almost one third
- 5 of the size
- 6 (*Figure 2c: The keynote speaker moves his left hand back to the front of his body*)
- 7 of the iPod mini.

The keynote speaker prepared this sequence with a tense and focused body position, as if he were pointing forward with his arms (Figure 2a), and by setting the iPod mini as an aspirational benchmark ("an incredibly successful product;" Line 2). Then, he highlighted the iPod nano's small size by presenting quantitative measures that suggested dramatic savings in this regard ("62% smaller," etc.; Lines 4–5). Importantly, the keynote speaker further substantiated these differences in size by lifting up his left hand and rhythmically underlining the spoken figures with it (Figure 2b). By indicating drastic changes in size based on quantitative measures, and further highlighting these as extraordinary through bodily movements, the keynote speaker suggested that the iPod nano was a novel part of Apple's product-market concept that substantially differed from its predecessor. The keynote speaker finished this sequence by moving his left hand back to the tense and forward-pointing position in front of his body (Figure 2c), as if he were excitedly showing the future direction of Apple's strategy in this moment. Thus, here, the forward-pointing "leaping" gestures that prepared and retracted the rhythmic bodily movement visibly supported the novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept.

## 4.2 | Relating

Relating refers to comparisons and contrasts that the keynote speakers employed to construct conceptions of Apple's strategy. Although this discursive practice partially overlapped with referencing, the scope of its emphasis extends beyond citing quantitative measures by stressing qualitative



**FIGURE 2** Foregrounding novel aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of referencing

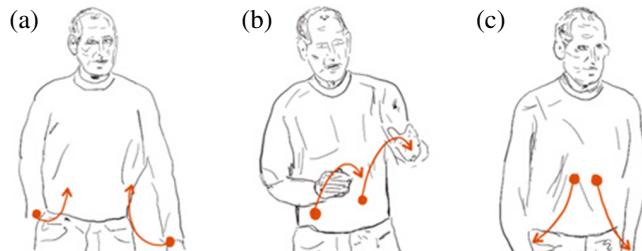
similarities and differences. Such comparisons and contrasts contributed to foregrounding familiar and novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept that references to numbers and figures were not able to highlight.

To illustrate how the keynote speakers enacted relating in order to foreground the familiar aspects of Apple's product-market concept, consider the introduction of the iPod touch, a music player with a touch display. Both the technology and the user interface of this product differed substantially from other iPod models, especially those that still relied on the classical "scroll wheel," for which the iPod originally became renowned. These technological differences enabled the iPod touch to address different consumer needs in the music market, such as visual music browsing on a larger display, and addressed further needs beyond music consumption, such as watching videos on a high-resolution display on the go. Yet, the iPod touch used most of the hardware and software developed for the iPhone, a smartphone that Apple introduced half a year earlier. In light of a number of differences with other iPod models, the keynote speaker highlighted the iPod touch as a familiar part of Apple's product-market concept:

#### Excerpt 3: Keynote 38

- 1 If you've used an iPhone,
- 2 (*Figure 3a: The keynote speaker lifts up his hands from a hanging position*)
- 3 you'll feel
- 4 (*Figure 3b: The keynote speaker bows his hands to the left*)
- 5 very much at home.
- 6 (*Figure 3c: The keynote speaker leads his hands back to a hanging position*)

In this sequence, the keynote speaker set the iPhone as a baseline for comparison (Line 1). Then, he highlighted the iPod touch as a familiar element of the product-market concept by using cozy words ("feel very much at home;" Lines 3–5) that conveyed the iPod touch's similarities with the iPhone. Significantly, the keynote speaker did not provide verbal displays that further substantiated the audience's familiarity with the iPhone. Although Apple had sold less than one million iPhones at this stage, the keynote speaker referred to this product in a self-evident way, as if everyone should already know about it. In this vein, the keynote speaker's unexcited bodily preparation of this sequence from a position with hanging arms (Figure 3a) conveyed little drama around the previous strategic move to enter the market for cellphones. Instead, the keynote speaker focused on foregrounding the similarities between the iPod touch and the iPhone through a bowing movement with both hands (Figure 3b). This bodily movement and its retraction back to an unexcited and relaxed bodily position with hanging arms (Figure 3c) indicated a smooth transition between these two products. Thus, the "leveling" gestures that prepared and retracted the bowing movement with both hands contributed to foregrounding the iPod touch as a familiar aspect of Apple's product-market concept.



**FIGURE 3** Foregrounding familiar aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of relating

The introduction of iTunes 7 illustrates how keynote speakers enacted relating in order to foreground novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept. This version of iTunes contributed to expanding Apple's engagement in the music business by releasing a number of features that enabled users to listen to their music in new and different ways. In addition, iTunes 7 included the ability to buy, download, and play movies, thus contributing to transforming the company's product-market concept even further toward that of a media company. However, compared to the previous version of iTunes, these new features were not readily visible. The keynote speaker explained the differences between both versions as follows:

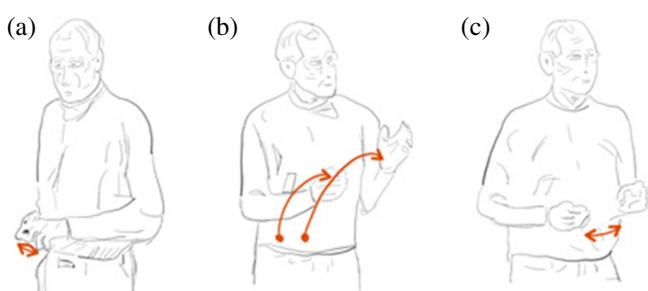
**Excerpt 4: Keynote 34**

- 1 (*Figure 4a: The keynote speaker keeps his hands in a tense position in front of the body*)
- 2 Now, you can say, "well, it doesn't look that different"—iTunes 6....
- 3 (*Figure 4b: The keynote speaker bows his hands to the left*)
- 4 iTunes 7, it looks pretty similar.
- 5 (*Figure 4c: The keynote speaker moves his hands back to the front of his body*)
- 6 Well, they're not—let me show you the difference...

Here, the keynote speaker prepared the sequence by holding his hands in front of the body in a tense and forward-pointing direction (Figure 4a), as if he were about to show the audience the way (at least in strategic terms). Then, he broached the seeming similarity between both versions of iTunes (Lines 2–4). The keynote speaker even substantiated the claim that iTunes 7 "looks pretty similar" (Line 4) by making a bowing hand movement (Figure 4b), as if he were not only verbally ("iTunes 6...iTunes 7;" Lines 2–4), but also visibly connected one version with the other. But then, the keynote speaker retracted this bodily movement by bringing his hands back to a tense position in front of the body (Figure 4c). Thus, before the keynote speaker went on to explain the differences between both versions of iTunes, he conveyed a sense of direction and excitement with this forward-pointing body position. In doing so, these "leaping" gestures, which prepared and retracted the bowing movement with both hands, indicated that novel aspects of the product-market concept would be on the way.

### 4.3 | Demarcating

Demarcating refers to a practice through which keynote speakers discursively set a product-market concept apart from others. Specifically, the keynote speakers enacted this discursive practice by emphatically presenting the firm's product-market concept as revolutionary and as the result of pioneering efforts. In doing so, they foregrounded both familiar and novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept.



**FIGURE 4** Foregrounding novel aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of relating

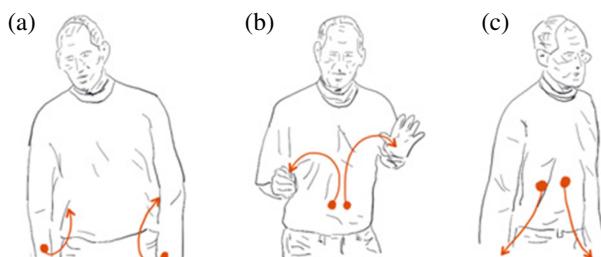
The introduction of the second-generation iPod shuffle illustrates how the keynote speakers enacted demarcating to foreground familiar aspects of Apple's product-market concept. In contrast to other iPods, the iPod shuffle has no display, thus being smaller, lighter, and more affordable. Therefore, the iPod shuffle became the entry model for price-conscious consumers and addressed the needs of consumers who appreciated the greater wearability of the music player, for instance, for sports activities. The second-generation iPod shuffle was even smaller and less expensive than its predecessor. It was based on an entirely new design with a built-in clip, which further supported its wearability. Before highlighting these differences, the keynote speaker foregrounded the familiar aspects of the music player as part of Apple's product-market concept:

**Excerpt 5: Keynote 34**

- 1 (*Figure 5a: The keynote speaker lifts his hands from a hanging position*)
- 2 We
- 3 (*Figure 5b: The keynote speaker moves his hands upward and outward and holds both*
- 4 *hands as if he were pushing forward*)
- 5 *pioneered this concept of the tiny, affordable*
- 6 (*Figure 5c: The keynote speaker leads hands back to a hanging position*)
- 7 *shuffle player. And it worked.*

The keynote speaker prepared this sequence with a relaxed body position with hanging arms (Figure 5a). He went on to claim that Apple was the first ("pioneered," Line 5) to introduce a product in the specific market category of music-playing devices ("tiny, affordable shuffle player;" Lines 5–7). Instead of providing further verbal displays that no other comparable product had existed before, the keynote speaker underlined this statement by pushing his hands forward (Figure 5b), as if he were visibly demarcating the product from other devices. Importantly, the keynote speaker used the past tense in this sequence, claiming that "it worked" (Line 7). Thus, he suggested that Apple's pioneering efforts in this market segment were already well established and that the audience should be familiar with the iPod shuffle as part of Apple's product-market concept in the meanwhile. The keynote speaker further foregrounded the familiarity with the iPod shuffle by leading his hands back to a relaxed and unexcited body position (Figure 5c) from where he had started, as if he were talking about nothing special. Thus, the "leveling" gestures that prepared and retracted the forward-pushing bodily movement helped the keynote speaker foreground a familiar aspect of Apple's product-market concept.

To illustrate how the keynote speakers enacted the discursive practice of demarcating to foreground the novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept, consider the introduction of the first iPod music player. From the beginning, this device was seamlessly integrated with iTunes and enabled consumers to rapidly and easily transfer digital music from the Mac (and later also the PC)



**FIGURE 5** Foregrounding familiar aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of demarcating

to the music player. This portable music player had a hard drive that allowed users to store and listen to up to 1,000 songs. Competitors' players with a similar storage capacity but a larger size had already been introduced. However, the keynote speaker introduced the iPod as follows:

#### Excerpt 6: Keynote 6

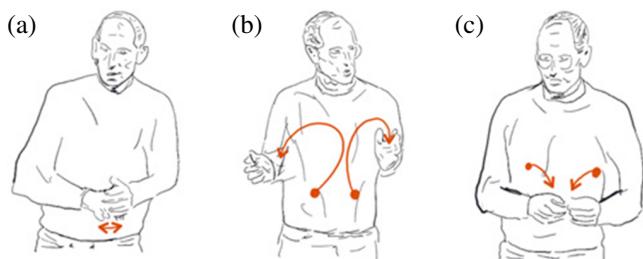
- 1 (*Figure 6a: The keynote speaker keeps his hands in a tense position in front of his body*)
- 2 iPod, 1,000 songs in your pocket. We think this is a
- 3 (*Figure 6b: The keynote speaker moves his hand upward and outward and holds both hands as if he were pushing forward*)
- 4 *both hands as if he were pushing forward*
- 5 *major, major breakthrough.*
- 6 (*Figure 6c: The keynote speaker moves his hands back to the front of his body*)

The keynote speaker began this sequence with a tense and forward-pointing body position (Figure 6a), as if he were about to present and illustrate a (strategic) direction. Then, he summarized a key feature of the iPod, that is, its storage capacity combined with its portability ("1,000 songs in your pocket;" Line 2), and highlighted it as distinctly unique ("breakthrough;" Line 5). Rather than mentioning competitors and how the iPod differed from their offers, the keynote speaker highlighted the claimed distinctiveness by repeating the magnifying attribute ("major, major;" Line 5), and underlined this statement through a forward-pushing bodily movement (Figure 6b); that is, the keynote speaker provided a visible display that demarcated the iPod from competing offers, and foregrounded it as a novel aspect of Apple's product-market concept that had not previously existed. He substantiated this by returning to the tense body position with both hands being placed in front of the body (Figure 6c), which displayed excitement and a forward-oriented direction. Thus, the "leaping" gestures that prepared and retracted the forward-pushing bodily movement contributed to foregrounding a novel aspect of Apple's product-market concept.

#### 4.4 | Mystifying

Mystifying refers to a discursive practice through which the keynote speakers obfuscated aspects of Apple's product-market concept. By enacting this discursive practice, the keynote speakers did not rely on "rational" arguments to fully explain the firm's product-market concept; instead, they posed questions that remained unanswered, and called on the audience to believe the claims made. In doing so, the keynote speakers foregrounded familiar and novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept.

The introduction of the iPod mini illustrates how the keynote speakers foregrounded familiar aspects of Apple's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of mystifying. The iPod mini was the first iPod model that complemented the original iPod. Instead of running on a hard drive, the iPod mini used flash memory. Consequently, the iPod mini was smaller, lighter, and more



**FIGURE 6** Foregrounding novel aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of demarcating

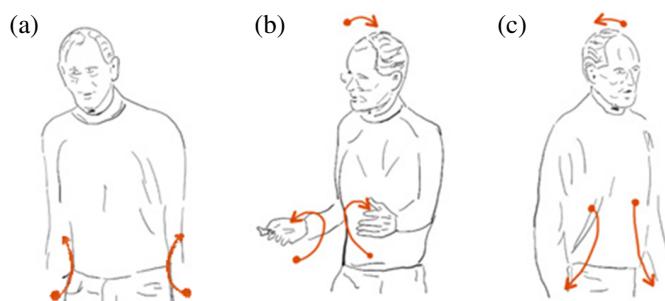
affordable than the original iPod, and therefore, targeted a different segment of the market for portable music players. The keynote speaker, however, began by praising the success of the original iPod and highlighting it as a familiar aspect of Apple's product-market concept:

**Excerpt 7: Keynote 21**

- 1 We are so thrilled with the success of the iPod,
- 2 (*Figure 7a*: The keynote speaker lifts his hands from a hanging position)
- 3 it's
- 4 (*Figure 7b*: The keynote speaker opens his arms and tilts his head)
- 5 *unbelievable*.
- 6 (*Figure 7c*: The keynote speaker leads his hands back to a hanging position)

Here, the keynote speaker began by referring to the iPod without any further explanation (Line 1), thus suggesting that the audience knew about the product. This was further emphasized by referring to its "success" (Line 1), which suggested that the audience should already be well aware of the iPod. Although the keynote speaker claimed that he and his colleagues were excited about the product's success (Line 1), he prepared this sequence with a relaxed body position with hanging arms (Figure 7a), and thus, visibly displayed little excitement. In doing so, he underlined the familiarity of the iPod as part of Apple's product-market concept. Instead of providing further spoken proof that would substantiate the introductory claim, the keynote speaker referred to this development as "unbelievable" (Line 5). Through the bodily movement that illustrated this statement (Figure 7b), the keynote speaker visibly expressed astonishment and the absence of any arguments to verbally substantiate the introductory claim. Thus, through this bodily movement, the keynote speaker avoided having to give further verbal explanation, and at the same time, emphasized the introductory claim by suggesting that the development of the iPod in the market for mobile music players would be extraordinary. Returning to a relaxed and unexcited body position (Figure 7c) further underlined the proposed familiarity with the iPod, as it suggested that everyone knew about the product, and that there was no reason to talk about it any further. Thus, the "leveling" gestures that prepared and retracted the perplexed bodily movement contributed to foregrounding and highlighting the iPod as a familiar aspect of Apple's product-market concept.

To illustrate how the keynote speakers foregrounded novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept by enacting the discursive practice of mystifying, let us return to the introduction of the iPod touch. Although this portable music player had more features than other iPod models, and borrowed most of its technology from the iPhone, it was even thinner than these other products. The keynote speaker explained this as follows:



**FIGURE 7** Foregrounding familiar aspects of a firm's product-market concept through the embodied enactment of mystifying

### Excerpt 8: Keynote 38

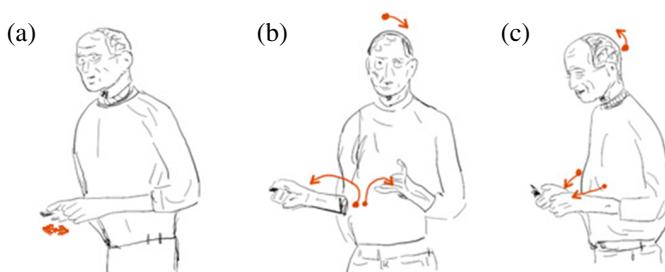
- 1 (*Figure 8a: The keynote speaker keeps his hands in a tense position in front of his body*)
- 2 How do you
- 3 (*Figure 8b: The keynote speaker opens his arms and tilts his head*)
- 4 fit all this [technology] in here? It's amazing!
- 5 (*Figure 8c: The keynote speaker moves his hands back to the front of his body*)

From the beginning of this sequence, the keynote speaker visibly expressed excitement through a tense and forward-oriented body position (Figure 8a). Instead of explaining the smaller size of the iPod touch in a prosaic, “fact”-based way, the keynote speaker asked a question about it (“How do you fit all this in here?”; Lines 2–4), and left the question unanswered. By expressing his amazement about the size of the iPod touch (Line 4), the keynote speaker verbally dispensed with the need to provide further explanation. He further underlined this through an inquiring bodily movement with open arms and a tilted head (Figure 8b), which illustrated his astonishment. In doing so, the keynote speaker dramatized the novel aspects of the iPod touch as part of Apple’s product-market concept. The keynote speaker substantiated this by returning his hands to the tense body position (Figure 8c) that expressed excitement. Through their forward-pointing orientation, the “leaping” gestures that prepared and retracted the perplexed bodily movement underlined the novel aspects of Apple’s product-market concept.

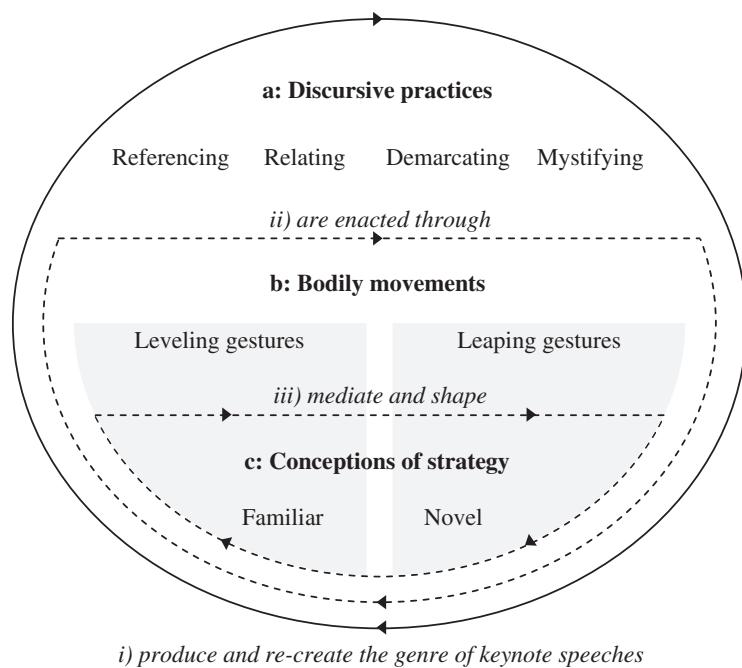
## 5 | DISCUSSION

We now synthesize our findings in a conceptual framework (see Figure 9), which consists of three analytical but interrelated layers: the discursive practices that constitute the genre of keynote speeches, the embodied enactment of these discursive practices, and conceptions of strategy that are produced and re-created through the embodied enactment of these discursive practices as a staged genre of strategic communication.

As illustrated in our framework (Figure 9a), our findings highlight several discursive practices that constitute and reproduce keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication and through which keynote speakers construct conceptions of a firm’s strategy: referencing, relating, demarcating, and mystifying. Referencing involves using technocratic talk to foreground aspects of a firm’s product-market concept. Relating entails comparing and contrasting aspects of a firm’s product-market concept with others to highlight their commonalities and differences. Demarcating focuses on setting a firm’s product-market concept apart from others. Finally, mystifying foregrounds aspects of a firm’s product-market concept by obfuscating them. The limited number of discursive practices and their enactment by several keynote speakers indicates that keynote speeches are “highly ritualized” (Fairclough, 2003, P. 72), and thus, reproduced as an institutionalized convention for strategic communication. Therefore,



**FIGURE 8** Foregrounding novel aspects of a firm’s product-market concept through the embodied enactment of mystifying



**FIGURE 9** The embodied enactment of discursive practices through which keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication

we conceptualize these discursive practices as the constitutive practices through which the genre of keynote speeches is produced and re-created (Figure 9i).

As shown in our findings, keynote speakers illustrate and underpin their discursive statements by enacting the discursive practices through bodily movements (Figure 9b). Therefore, we conceptualize bodily movements as an inseparable part of discursive practices in the production and reproduction of the genre of keynote speeches (Figure 9ii). As our study demonstrates, keynote speakers enact sequences of gestures in which they prepare and retract these distinct bodily movements with “leveling” and “leaping” gestures. Leveling gestures refer to the preparation of bodily movements from and their retraction to a relaxed, hanging arm position. Leaping gestures relate to the preparation of bodily movements from and their retraction to an arm position in front of the body with stronger body tension. The limited repertoire of bodily movements and their enactment across different keynote speakers indicates that these bodily movements are enacted “as social conventions” (Gylfe et al., 2016, p. 140), that is, as bodily features of staged performances through which the genre of keynotes speeches comes into being.

Our study shows that the enactment of these types of bodily movements is consequential for producing and re-creating different conceptions of strategy (Figure 9c). As shown in the findings, the keynote speakers produced both conceptions of Apple’s strategy—as familiar and novel—by enacting all four explored discursive practices, but the type of bodily movements through which these discursive practices were enacted systematically produced and reproduced different conceptions of Apple’s strategy: Enacting leveling gestures contributes to foregrounding familiar aspects of a firm’s product-market concept, and enacting leaping gestures highlights the novel aspects of a firm’s product-market concept. Hence, our findings demonstrate that keynote speakers mediate and shape conceptions of strategy by enacting the discursive practices through different types of bodily movements (Figure 9iii). These staged performances enable keynote speakers to construct and manipulate conceptions of a firm’s strategy. Thus, it is through the embodied enactment of the four explored

discursive practices that keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication.

## 5.1 | The genre of keynote speeches as a multimodal accomplishment

Our article extends the strategy-as-practice literature that has begun to devote more attention to genres of strategic communication. These few studies have mainly focused on exploring the discursive practices through which document-based genres of strategic communication come into being (e.g., Kaplan, 2011; Vaara et al., 2010). In our study of keynote speeches as an important but under-explored genre of strategic communication (Biehl-Missal, 2011; Schreyögg & Höpfl, 2004), we also found the enactment of several discursive practices through which this genre is produced and re-created.

Yet, our study goes further and shows that a deeper understanding of keynote speeches as a genre of strategic communication is not possible by focusing solely on talk. More specifically, our study shows that the discursive practices that produce and re-create the genre of keynote speeches are inseparably connected with the bodily movements through which they are enacted. Thus, our study demonstrates how the interplay of talk and bodily movements is consequential for constructing conceptions of strategy, and thus, produces and re-creates keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication. In this vein, we conceptualized the genre of keynote speeches as a multimodal accomplishment (Streeck et al., 2011), that is, the performative outcome of enacting several modes of strategic communication and not just talk alone. By showing how keynote speeches are multimodally produced and re-created as a staged genre of strategic communication, our study heeds calls to explore how genres of strategic communication, in general (Balogun et al., 2014), and staged genres of strategic communication, in particular (Biehl-Missal, 2011), come into being. In doing so, our study extends prior research on document-based genres of strategic communication by exploring and conceptualizing the multimodal interplay of talk and bodily movements in producing and re-creating keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication.

Our conceptualization of the genre of keynote speeches as a multimodal accomplishment also expands our understanding of the power effects of discursive practices, and thus, extends prior research on discourse in the strategy process that has partially identified related discursive practices. In fact, our study provides insights into the discursive aspects through which keynote speeches become “mass spectacles” that keynote speakers instrumentally enact to construct and define social reality for audiences (Biehl-Missal, 2011). As is required for convincing staged performances (Boje et al., 2004), our findings show that all identified discursive practices involve a form of drama and overacting in order to foreground the novel aspects of a firm’s product-market concept. The fact that actors can also achieve this by enacting “narrativization” (Vaara et al., 2006) or “mythopoeisis” (Vaara & Tienari, 2008) to unobtrusively legitimize strategic moves helps us draw more nuanced attention to the subtle power effects that are involved in enacting the genre of keynote speeches. More specifically, “referencing” overlaps to a certain extent with “authorization,” a discursive practice that actors enact to discursively render strategic moves as acceptable (e.g., Vaara et al., 2006). Furthermore, similar to Mantere and Vaara’s (2008) exploration of “mystifying” as a discursive practice that systematically reproduces non-participation in the strategy process, enacting “mystifying” enables keynote speakers to “preach” strategy by obfuscating how it was formed in the first place. This implies that keynote speakers discursively construct and reproduce hegemonic power relationships in which these actors gain dominance over the construction of conceptions of strategy, and the audience silently takes the role of accepting and implementing the strategy.

Yet, our study goes further by demonstrating that the power effects of enacting keynote speeches do not reside in discourse alone. Specifically, our findings show how keynote speakers manipulate and shape conceptions of strategy through the embodied enactment of discursive practices. Thus, our study demonstrates that not only the genre of keynote speeches, but also its power effects are multimodally accomplished through the interplay of talk and bodily movements. Accordingly, our article extends studies that examine the power effects of discursive practices by showing and illustrating the multimodal accomplishment of such effects through the embodied enactment of discursive practices that produces and re-creates keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication.

## 5.2 | The systematic role of bodily movements in the construction of conceptions of strategy

Our study also responds to mounting calls to devote more attention to the role of the strategist's body in the strategy process (e.g., Balogun et al., 2014; Gylfe et al., 2016). Specifically, our findings show how keynote speakers use bodily movements to mediate and shape conceptions of strategy. This implies that the absence of such visual support, for example, by listening to keynote speeches in audio formats, may not have equally persuasive effects. In this vein, our study shows that bodily movements are not just "associated" with different conceptions of strategy (e.g., Liu & Maitlis, 2014), but systematically contribute to producing and re-creating them. By illustrating the consequentiality of these bodily patterns in and their coalescence with strategic communication, our study enlarges and showcases the important role of the body in the strategy process, and thus, contributes to expanding the strategy-as-practice research agenda beyond focusing mainly on discourse in strategy-making (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

Our study also extends prior research that has begun to explore the role of the strategist's body in the strategy process. This research has shown that the bodily movements through which discursive practices are enacted support actors in conducting their strategy work (e.g., Balogun et al., 2015; Gylfe et al., 2016). In this vein, our findings show how keynote speakers underline their discursive statements through distinct bodily movements, and thus, support the construction of conceptions of strategy.

Yet, our study goes further by illustrating the patterns through which bodily movements systematically contribute to producing and re-creating different conceptions of strategy. Specifically, in contrast to prior research (e.g., Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Liu & Maitlis, 2014), we did not find that the distinct bodily movements through which actors enact discursive practices make systematic differences in the construction of conceptions of strategy. For example, in our study, the keynote speakers foregrounded both familiar and novel aspects of Apple's product-market concept by enacting referencing through the same rhythmic, vertical hand movement. Rather, our study illustrates that the gestures that *prepare* and *retract* those distinct bodily movements systematically contribute to constructing different conceptions of strategy. This finding draws attention to broader "complexes" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 251) of bodily movements that are involved in systematically producing and re-creating different conceptions of strategy and exhorts us to extend examinations of the role of the body in the strategy process beyond the analysis of distinct bodily movements through which discursive practices are enacted. By exploring and illustrating the broader bodily patterns through which Apple's keynote speakers constructed different conceptions of strategy, our study contributes to a more systematic and nuanced understanding of *how* the bodies of strategists become relevant in the strategy process.

These findings also provide insights into the seemingly paradoxical challenge of mobilizing support for a firm's strategy by foregrounding both its familiar and novel aspects (e.g., Barry & Elmes, 1997; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014). As our study demonstrates, it is possible to produce and re-create both familiar and novel conceptions of strategy through the enactment of one and the same genre of strategic communication. Specifically, our findings show that all discursive practices

through which keynote speeches are produced and re-created contribute to constructing both familiar and novel conceptions of strategy; yet, it is their enactment through bodily preparation and retraction movements through which either familiar or novel aspects of a firm's strategy are foregrounded in specific situations. This implies that the tensions and contradictions of foregrounding both familiar and novel aspects of a firm's strategy may not surface in the discursive aspects of strategic communication, but remain hidden in the subtle bodily movements through which these discursive practices are enacted. By exploring these bodily patterns, our study specifies how strategists use their bodies to produce and re-create both familiar and novel aspects of a firm's strategy through the enactment of keynote speeches as a staged genre of strategic communication. In light of the preponderance of works on the discursive aspects of tensions and contradictions (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016), the explored relevance of the bodies of strategists for producing and re-creating conflicting yet complementary conceptions of strategy also points to the need for research on paradoxes (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016) through a multimodal lens that devotes more nuanced attention to such bodily aspects.

### 5.3 | The use of video-based research methods in strategy-as-practice research

Our study also contributes to expanding the methodological repertoire of strategy-as-practice research. In response to the prevalence of the use of interview, documentary, and observational data in this stream of research (Vaara & Whittington, 2012), prior works have called for a more widespread use of video-based research methods because they allow scholars to examine strategic phenomena with even more precision and detail (e.g., Gylfe et al., 2016; Vesa & Vaara, 2014). In this vein, our video-based study provides detailed insights into the discursive and bodily patterns through which keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication. These detailed insights also extend and elaborate Burgelman's (2002) notion of "strategy by speech." Specifically, our video-based examination of keynote speeches provides a more specific and nuanced understanding of the discursive and bodily patterns through which managers enact one popular genre of strategic communication. Our finding that this genre is a multimodal accomplishment deepens our appreciation of the fact that managers' public appearances are not just text-based "speeches" that can be scripted, but also involve bodily rehearsal and training to convincingly articulate, disseminate, and mobilize support for strategies.

Yet, our study shows that the usefulness of video-based research methods for the examination of strategic phenomena extends beyond increased analytical precision. More specifically, in the process of relying on the affordances of video technology, including replaying, pausing, and zooming in, we have gradually rendered the multimodal aspects of this genre visible, which text-based analyses of interviews and documents would have concealed, and which would have been difficult, if not impossible, to recognize and record during live observations. Thus, our study explores and showcases an uncommon strength of video methods: They render aspects of strategic phenomena accessible to investigation that would most likely pass unnoticed when using more conventional methodological approaches. This insight promises to allow scholars to use video-based research methods to explore unnoticed aspects of the strategy process that turn out to be consequential for strategy-making, and thus, invites scholars to make more extensive use of video methods in strategy research, in general, and in strategy-as-practice research, in particular.

Finally, our article also adds to the nascent debate on the analysis of video data in strategy research (e.g., Gylfe et al., 2016; LeBaron et al., Forthcoming; Vesa & Vaara, 2014). In fact, as video technology becomes increasingly accessible, the lack of understanding of how video data can be fruitfully analyzed seems to be the main, if not the most important obstacle to using video-based

research methods more fully in strategy research (Gylfe et al., 2016). In this study, we built on Gylfe et al.'s (2016) video method to more closely observe the bodily movements through which keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication.

Yet, our study extends beyond the mere application of Gylfe et al.'s (2016) method by embedding it in critical discursive analysis. This allowed us to tailor our methodological approach to our specific theoretical interest in the embodied enactment of discursive practices through which keynote speeches are produced and re-created. In doing so, our study illustrates how scholars can leverage more fully the multimodal qualities of video data to systematically analyze talk and bodily movements in concert. Future empirical inquiries that might build on such an approach would likely continue to address recent calls to explore orchestrations of talk, bodily movements, and other resources in strategy-making (e.g., Balogun et al., 2014).

## 6 | CONCLUSION

In this article, we developed a framework that conceptualizes how keynote speeches come into being as a staged genre of strategic communication. We explored the embodied enactment of discursive practices that produces and re-creates this genre by analyzing video recordings of Apple's keynote speeches. Our conceptualization of the genre of keynote speeches as a multimodal accomplishment raises several questions for future research. For instance, how do the material aspects of keynote speeches, such as PowerPoint slides (e.g., Knight, Paroutis, & Heracleous, 2018) and curtains, contribute to producing and re-creating conceptions of strategy? How do keynote speakers perform a "style," that is, "a particular way of being, i.e. a particular identity" (Fairclough, 2005, p. 925), on stage and what consequences does this have for constructing conceptions of strategy? And how does the "staging" of conceptions of strategy through keynote speeches affect firm performance?

Further research opportunities emerge by acknowledging the boundary conditions of our study. Although the signs of ritualization we identified suggest that the explored discursive and bodily patterns are conceptually valid even across keynote speakers from different firms (Fairclough, 2003; Gylfe et al., 2016), these patterns most likely reflect a North American way of enacting keynote speeches. In fact, European managers seem to rehearse their staged performances much less, and are less convincing in constructing conceptions of strategy (Biehl-Missal, 2011). Future research may explore such cultural differences more systematically.

In addition, Apple's managers are widely considered to be adept at giving persuasive keynote speeches (see Coff, 2010). Keynote speakers who enact this genre less skillfully may not reproduce the same discursive and bodily patterns, or with less consistency, and may thus be less convincing in constructing conceptions of strategy. Analyzing such cases may provide additional insights into the discursive and bodily patterns through which the focal genre and its power effects come into being and how they affect firm performance.

Furthermore, to gain a better understanding of how recipients of strategic communication may resist the consumption of conceptions of strategy (Laine & Vaara, 2007), for instance, by turning staged spectacles into carnival (e.g., Boje et al., 2004), future research may focus less on the production of discursive statements through keynote speakers and more on how audiences interpret and enact these statements. Another interesting question is whether the patterns that we found are also transferable to other staged genres of strategic communication, such as strategy updates (Whittington et al., 2016) and annual general meetings (Biehl-Missal, 2011). Here, dramaturgical analysis (Goffman, 1959) might be a promising methodological alternative.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the supporting information tab for this article.

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