

“Judging a Book by Its Cover”: The Dominance of Delivery Over Content When Perceiving Charisma

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Avner Caspi¹, Ronit Bogler¹ ,
and Ofir Tzuman¹

Abstract

Perceived charisma is an outcome of message content and delivery, where the latter dominates the former. Framing perception of charisma within dual-process theories, we suggest a rapid processing of delivery and a slow processing of content. We aimed to track the differential processing speed of content and delivery that accounts for the delivery dominance. In two laboratory experiments, we manipulated content and delivery. Participants reported perceived charisma after viewing a presentation (Experiment 1) or moment-by-moment during the presentation (Experiment 2). The results confirmed the immediate influence of delivery on perceived charisma that was later either supported or revised by the content. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords

leadership, charisma, dual-process, decision

¹The Open University of Israel, Raanana, Israel

Corresponding Author:

Avner Caspi, Department of Education and Psychology, The Open University of Israel, 1
University Road, Raanana 4353701, Israel.

Email: avnerca@openu.ac.il

Introduction

It is often claimed that we should not make judgments based only on appearances, but time after time we face instances where we follow biased processes in making decisions (Ariely, 2008; Baron, 2007; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). When voting for a political candidate, choosing a school by its principal, recruiting a general manager for a company, or selecting a theater director, people are influenced by the performance or the show of the entrant. That person strives to prove to the audience that he or she is the most suitable among all. However, sometimes the performance skills and the content conveyed by the agent are not compatible. A virtuous presenter may deliver a bad (i.e., immoral, false, disorganized, or even simply void) message, whereas an important and good message may be obscured by an insipid presenter. The current research examines the development of perceived charisma over time to shed light on those specific situations, in which perception is based on the incompatibility between message and delivery. These instances are relatively ignored in the scientific body of research on charisma. Specifically, our goal is to test to what extent the immediate impression of the speaker—a mean to impact one's perception (Peck & Hogue, 2018)—is updated after noticing that the message and the delivery are misaligned. We claim that the delivery is processed rapidly whereas the message is processed slowly; furthermore, delivery is granted dominance when perceiving charisma. By manipulating the message (i.e., the content) and the quality of the delivery, we aim to test their separate and joint effects on perceived charisma, and more importantly—the timing of these effects. We seek to make two contributions to the current body of knowledge on perceived charisma: First, to offer a dual-process approach to understand the perception of charisma, which suggests an immediate impression that is based on a rapid processing of the delivery and a slow processing of the content. We argue that the first impression (Overa & Cook, 2018; Todorov, 2017), based on delivery, may anchor the perception of charisma and dominate subsequent judgments that are based on content, which is processed relatively slowly. Our second contribution is methodological. We employ a unique method to track perceived charisma over time, in which we trace second-by-second the immediate impact of delivery on perceived charisma whereas content lags behind. We are not aware of any study that has adopted this tracking procedure to measure perceived charisma.

Although charisma is easily recognized and unmistakably agreed upon when someone possesses it, the phenomenon is still ill-defined in the scientific literature (Antonakis, Bastardo, Jacquart, & Shamir, 2016; Castelnovo, Popper, & Koren, 2017; Grabo, Spisak, & van Vugt, 2017; Sy, Horton, & Riggio, 2018). Charisma has been defined in the leadership literature in

different ways (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House & Shamir, 1993; Weber, 1925/1968; for recent review, see Antonakis et al., 2016), but common to most (but not all) of these definitions is the idea that charisma is a perceptual phenomenon. Central to many conceptions of charisma is the ability of the leader to articulate a *vision* and move the followers toward achieving it (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Davis & Gardner, 2012; Deichmann & Stam, 2015), and subsequently toward an ideal future state (Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014). Communicating a vision includes both the content of the message as well as its delivery (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Bligh et al., 2004; Clark & Greatbatch, 2011; Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Rosenberg & Hirschberg, 2009). Although past research took into consideration other variables (e.g., organizational performance cues, leadership beliefs) as affecting perceived charisma, in addition to delivery and vision, delivery has been found a key determinant of perceived charisma. In some cases, the effect of delivery appeared “to offset those of organizational performance” (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999, p. 364). Thus, in the current research, we define perceived charisma as the combined perceptions of vision and delivery (Holladay & Coombs, 1994). We begin by defining visionary content and delivery, reviewing the few experiments that tested their joint effect, then vision and delivery will be mapped according to the dual-process framework into fast and slow processes to explain the immediate and dominance effect of delivery over vision.

A visionary content should refer to the audience emotions, values, identities, and hopes, their collective history and moral justification, as well as the speaker’s own identification with the audience (Clark & Greatbatch, 2011; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). It must relate to some idealized or desired goals that the leader wants the followers to achieve in the future (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). The visionary content is typically ambitious, challenges conventional wisdom and prevailing norms and policies, sets high performance standards, and instills confidence in followers that they can achieve it (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Given all these aspects of visionary content, Strange and Mumford (2002, 2005) argued that vision involves “a set of beliefs about how people should act, and interact, to make manifest some idealized future state” (p. 122). Practically, they suggested that a visionary content describes differences between the current state of a system and an idealized future state. The leader infuses personal and interpersonal meaning into the desired state and generates a visionary plan.

The delivery as rhetoric is a crucial tool for charismatic leaders to convey their vision effectively and influence followers to adopt it (Baur et al., 2016). It is composed of a range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors, including a

captivating tone of voice, exhibiting verbal fluency, maintaining eye contact with the audience, gesturing freely, adopting a relaxed posture, and using facial expressions (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Rosenberg & Hirschberg, 2009). Using this ensemble of behaviors, the speaker injects a powerful, confident, and dynamic presence into the content being communicated.

A few studies have tested the influence of content and delivery on perceived charisma. These studies suggested testing two important questions: First, the relative contribution of vision and delivery (the dominance question), and second, the results of vision-delivery incompatibility. Holladay and Coombs (1994) manipulated content (visionary vs. non-visionary) and delivery (strong vs. weak), and measured perceived charisma in four conditions. A trained actor performed the role of a new manager. Content was manipulated such that, in a "visionary" condition, the actor communicated a well-articulated vision, strong sense of organizational mission, reference to shared values, expression of faith in the subordinates, and expectation for their input. In contrast, the "non-visionary" content minimized all the above, poorly articulated a view of the future, presented a less optimistic outlook, and expressed less faith in subordinates. Delivery was manipulated such that, in a "strong" condition, the actor maintained good eye contact with audience, displayed relevant gestures, showed facial expressiveness, and varied his tone of voice. In contrast, in the "weak" condition, all the above were minimized, the actor often read from a prepared manuscript and exhibited vocal disfluencies.

Holladay and Coombs (1994) found that the leader is perceived as more charismatic after participants viewed the leader addressing visionary rather than non-visionary content. Similarly, the leader is perceived as more charismatic after participants viewed the leader adopting strong rather than weak delivery. They also found an interaction effect: The difference between content types was smaller under weak delivery than under strong delivery. In addition, they revealed that delivery influenced perceived charisma more than the content. Holladay and Coombs' main effects and the dominance of delivery over content were replicated by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996), Awamleh and Gardner (1999), and Johnson and Dipboye (2008). These studies did not explain why delivery dominates perceived charisma. Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Delivery will be dominant over content in determining perceived charisma.

If charisma is a combination of visionary content and strong delivery, then the way followers perceive the two components may be crucial for their

perception of the leader. Holladay and Coombs (1994) and the replication studies mentioned above have also revealed that delivery holds superiority over content in determining charisma, which under specific circumstances may interfere with the impact of content. If, for example, a poor vision is delivered in an appealing way or a good vision is conveyed in a weak presentation—the perceived charisma of the leader may not correspond to his or her leadership potential. We contend that content and delivery are two separate entities. Furthermore, they may be processed in two different forms that may influence the weight each of them is granted when judging a leader's charisma. We suggest applying dual-process theory to assess the unique contribution of delivery and vision, and to track their combined influence on perceived charisma over time.

Dual-process theories of the mind are pervasive in psychology (Evans & Stanovich, 2013), mainly in social cognition, memory and learning, judgment and decision-making, and reasoning. Common to all dual-process theories is the conception that there are two different modes of processing, which Stanovich (1999) termed “System 1” and “System 2” processes (see also Evans, 2008; Kahneman, 2011). Processes that are unconscious, rapid, automatic, and require low mental efforts may be clustered in System 1, whereas processes that are conscious, slow, and deliberative may be grouped under System 2. The notion of two systems has been criticized over the years (e.g., Keren & Schul, 2009; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Melnikoff & Bargh, 2018; Osman, 2004). However, we employ this framework because it may shed light on the way people perceive charisma, especially when content and delivery produce conflicting impressions.

A key difference between System 1 and System 2 is the speed by which a decision is made. Very few studies have documented moment-by-moment decisional variations attributed to the two processes (e.g., Hamm, 1988; Pryor, Reeder, Yeadon, & Hesson-McInnis, 2004). None of them tested an “updating” decision that is attributed to a contradiction between the results of the two processes. We propose that if the features that are processed by System 1 and those processed by System 2 suggest opposing decisions or judgment, an update for the rapid decision made by System 1 would be followed as a result of the process attributed to System 2. It is noted that the suggested updating is indifferent to the question whether the two systems operate serially or in parallel (Bonner & Newell, 2010; Evans, 2007; Pryor et al., 2004). In both, the decision made by the rapid system is updated by the decision made by the slow one. To document this updating, we will examine the perception of charisma using a moment-by-moment tracking—a procedure that, as far as we are aware, has not yet been studied. An examination of the moment-by-moment impact of leadership speeches offers a novel

analytical lens and provides a fruitful avenue for exploring social cognitive aspects of individuals' assessments of charisma and leadership. Particularly, it may demonstrate both the immediate impact of delivery, the time by which vision influences perception, and the suggested mechanism as well as the extent of updating the initial perception of charisma.

Adopting the dual-process framework, it is suggested that delivery might be perceived as a rapid and automatic process, which operates without deliberation—a System 1 process, whereas the content requires controlled, systematic analysis, which therefore is slower as is typified by System 2 process (Brown, 2013). A line of research has demonstrated that people are impressed quite rapidly and accurately by others, even before a meaningful content is delivered (Ambady, Bernieri, & Richeson, 2000; Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992; Murphy et al., 2015; Slepian, Bogart, & Ambady, 2014). In these studies, perceivers see a presentation of very few seconds and can glean accurate information about the presenters' state, traits, and personal characteristics. This effect was found also for leadership (Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Benjamin & Shapiro, 2009; Rule & Ambady, 2011; Spezio, Loesch, Gosselin, Mattes, & Alvarez, 2012; Tskhay, Zhu, & Rule, 2017). Benjamin and Shapiro (2009) showed 10-s silent video clips of unfamiliar gubernatorial debates to participants. They found that participants predicted fairly well the actual winner. Benjamin and Shapiro suggested that participants' judgment rests on candidates' personal attributes rather than their policy position. Thus, appearance and presentation can be perceived very rapidly, almost without any mental effort. Surprisingly, this thin slice information seems to be accurate and predictive. For the current study, we were not interested in the accuracy of the information, but rather in the role that content and delivery play in affecting the perception of charisma. Is it really the case that delivery is perceived quickly, and this rapid processing causes its superiority over the content?

The time needed for processing content may be dependent on a complex array of factors. However, indirect evidence suggests that to understand and judge content, especially a content that contains vision, one needs time. First, auditory information (i.e., the content) is processed more slowly than the visual information that is mainly transferred via delivery (Colavita, 1974; Van Damme, Crombez, & Spence, 2009). Second, for a message to be understood, the average speech rate of adults in English should be between 150 and 200 words per minute (Deese, 1984; Laver, 1994; Rodero, 2012; Tauroza & Allison, 1990; Walker, 2010). Third, visionary content should express idealized or desired goals (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Often, the visionary content is articulated to evince the differences between the current state and a future intended state (Strange & Mumford, 2005). As such, it requires the followers' attention and consciousness, and cannot be processed without

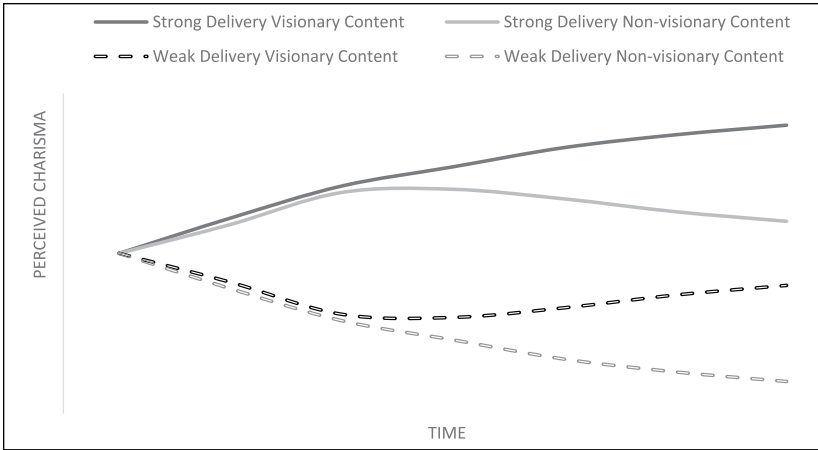


Figure 1. Theoretical illustration of perceived charisma over time when content and delivery are aligned or misaligned.

mental effort. Attentive, conscious, and deliberative processing was classified above as System 2 type that happens relatively slowly. We therefore hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 2: When examining a moment-by-moment perception, delivery will influence perceived charisma more rapidly than content.

Assuming that the delivery is processed more rapidly than the content, we predicted that if content and delivery are aligned—visionary content and strong delivery or non-visionary content and weak delivery—the perception of charisma suggested by System 1 processing will be supported by System 2 later processing. Under these circumstances, the first impression is reinforced, and the decision on one’s perceived charisma or non-charisma may be stabilized. However, if the content and the delivery are misaligned, that is, conditions of visionary content and weak delivery or non-visionary content and strong delivery are prevailed, the perception will be updated. In other words, the first “charisma” or “non-charisma” decision is challenged and revisited. This revision affects the value assigned to the speaker’s charisma. Figure 1 presents the theoretical perception vis-à-vis elapsing time. It should be noted that there is no expectation for full update because System 1 processing continuously contributes and supports the first decision. Following, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 3: If delivery and content are misaligned (i.e., conditions of visionary content and weak delivery *or* non-visionary content and strong delivery prevail), the perception of charisma will be updated, such that the immediate perception of charisma—which is based on delivery—will be changed by the outcome of content processing. In non-visionary content, perceived charisma will decrease, whereas in visionary content it will increase (see Figure 1).

Two experiments are reported below. Experiment 1 was aimed to replicate previous findings regarding the impact of delivery and content on perceived charisma. Experiment 2, for the first time, traced perception of charisma moment-by-moment to uncover the updating mechanism suggested above. The unique contribution of this study is that it applies a social cognition perspective and implements a dual-process account to understand the formation of a person's perceived charisma.

Experiment 1

Two main objectives were set for the Experiment 1: First, to conceptually replicate the experimental design that aimed to examine the influence of delivery and content on perceived charisma. By doing so, we will be able to provide evidence regarding the relative impact of delivery and content; second, to extend the scope of the experiment to an educational setting where principals represent the educational leadership of the school, and are being evaluated, among other things, by their ability to influence the decisions of others. Using an experimental design, where a school principal is being played to test the impact of his delivery and content on the participants' own perceptions of his charisma represents an example of an educational setting that expands the scope of this type of research work. If confirmed, the findings of the current study could be applied to educational settings where principals, representing the educational leadership of the school, are being evaluated, among other things, by their ability to influence interest groups regarding key education matters.

Method

Design. A 2×2 factorial design was used to manipulate experimentally content (visionary vs. non-visionary) and delivery (strong vs. weak), generating four conditions. Participants were divided among the four conditions. For the conceptual replication, we used a trained male actor that performed the role of a high school principal in a meeting with parents considering whether to enroll

their child for the next year. The actor presented his educational vision, to convince parents to choose the school he heads. A visionary presentation was written following Strange and Mumford's (2002, 2005) Vision Formation Model. The model suggests that visionary content begins by recognizing the differences between two mental models: a descriptive model that reflects the system as it is, and a prescriptive model that reflects the system as it might be. The prescriptive model is then articulated and refined to provide personal meaning for the leader and interpersonal meaning for followers. The visionary content stressed personal values and standards, perceived social needs, and pointed to required changes. The non-visionary presentation omitted the inspirational themes and reduced symbolic language. This type of speech is more direct and information oriented, less optimistic, and contains more clichés.

Delivery was manipulated following Holladay and Coombs' (1994) manipulation. During the strong delivery, the actor maintained eye contact, displayed dynamic hand and body gestures, used facial expressiveness, and varied his tone of voice, and the actor was relaxed and confident. In contrast, in the weak delivery, all the above were minimized, and the actor presented stress and tension. The clips length ranged from 8:37 to 8:50 min each. Table 1 summarizes the similarities and differences between Holladay and Coombs's (1994) experiment and the current one.

Participants. In total, 80 undergraduate students (18.8% men) whose ages ranged from 20 to 56 years ($M = 30.2$ years, $SD = 8.04$ years) participated in this experiment. In total, 21 were parents, of these 14 had children attending different levels of schooling. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Based on Holladay and Coombs' (1994) results, we expected a medium to large effect size. Power analysis revealed that the total sample size required was 80 participants.

Measures

Manipulation check. Two questionnaires were used to measure content and delivery. The *content* questionnaire composed four items representing Strange and Mumford's (2005) conceptualization. Participants were asked to rate the content of the principal's vision on a 5-point scale (ranged from "not at all" to "very much") as being "exciting," "practical," "clear," and "well planned." Alpha coefficient was computed within each group and then pooled across groups. We used the varying-coefficient meta-analysis method for alpha reliability (Bonett, 2010) to combine the coefficients and compute a confidence interval [CI] for the average. Average alpha was .79, 95% CI = [.49, .92].

Table 1. Comparing Holladay and Coombs' (1994) Experiment and the Current One.

	Holladay and Coombs	Current experiment
Role of the player Scenario	New district manager First staff meeting conducted by the new district manager	High school principal Meeting with parents considering enrolling their child in the school
Manipulation of vision	Organizational mission, shared values, self- confidence and competence, faith in subordinates, expectations	Current and future states, personal values and standards, perceived social needs, required changes
Manipulation of delivery	Eye contact, gestures, facial expression, vocal variety	Eye contact, gestures, facial expression, vocal variety
Measure of charisma	18 MLQ items	8 MLQ items
Manipulation check—vision	14 items that covered 4 aspects of vision (faith in subordinates, mission, inspiration, and future orientation)	4 items that represented Strange and Mumford's (2005) conceptualization of visionary content
Manipulation check— delivery	8 items corresponded to 4 aspects of delivery	5 items; 4 related to the 4 aspects of delivery + one general item

Note. MLQ = Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.

The *delivery* questionnaire composed five items (average α was .86, 95% CI = [.80, .92]), based on the measures used by Holladay and Coombs (1993, 1994). Participants were asked to rate the principal on the same 5-point scale as having “*good ability to present ideas*,” “*good body language*,” “*good intonation*,” “*good eye contact*,” and “*fluent communication*.”

Charisma. Eight items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ, Bass & Avolio, 1995) were used. MLQ is the most prevailed measure of charismatic leadership (Horn, Mathis, Robinson, & Randle, 2015; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), and these specific items measure the degree to which one is perceived as possessing charismatic traits (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). Example items are as follows: “This principal talks of values and beliefs that are important to him,” “This principal displays a feeling of power and confidence,” and “This principal considers the moral and ethical implications of his decisions regarding school management.” Average alpha was .89, 95% CI = [.69, .96].

Procedure

After completing the demographics questionnaire, the experimenter introduced the video clip as follows: “*In the nine minute video clip you are about to watch, you will see a principal of a new high school which will open its gates for the first time next year. The principal’s audience is a group of parents of students who must now choose a school for their children. Imagine that you are one of these parents.*”

At the end of the video clip, the participants completed the charisma questionnaire and the manipulation check questionnaire. Finally, the experimenter debriefed the participants.

Results and Discussion

We found a significant difference between strong and weak delivery in the manipulation check: Strong delivery was rated as better than the weak one ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.77$; $M = 1.61$, $SD = 0.91$, respectively), mean difference = 1.39, 95% CI = [0.85, 1.93], $t(78) = 7.36$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.61$. We also found a significant difference between visionary and non-visionary content: Visionary content was rated higher than non-visionary content ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.73$; $M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.14$, respectively), mean difference = 0.7, 95% CI = [0.07, 1.31], $t(78) = 3.23$, $p < .005$, Cohen’s $d = 0.79$. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significant effect of delivery on perceived charisma, $F(1, 76) = 11.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. The principal’s charisma received a higher rating under strong delivery relative to weak delivery ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.74$ vs. $M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.01$, respectively). Under visionary content, the charisma of the principal was rated to be higher than under non-visionary content ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.74$ vs. $M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.06$, respectively), $F(1, 76) = 7.13$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 76) = 2.30$, $p = .13$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

Thus, Experiment 1 replicated previous findings regarding the effect of delivery and content on perceived charisma (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Johnson & Dipboye, 2008; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). The principal was perceived as being more charismatic when visionary rather than non-visionary content was articulated, and when a strong rather than a weak delivery was used.

The findings revealed that perceived charisma was influenced by the delivery and the content articulated by the school principal. It seems that the experiment’s setting of a school principal talking to parents was clear to the study participants who were asked to evaluate the principal’s charisma. This impression was supported by the debriefing session the experimenter gave following the completion of the experiment.

Experiment 2

The aim of Experiment 2 was to uncover the speed by which the two processing systems influence the perception of charisma. To do so, we asked participants to continually report their perception while viewing the school principal's presentation. As in the Experiment 1, we manipulated delivery and content to test their separate and joint effects, and more importantly the timing of these effects.

Method

Participants. Participants comprised 117 adults (age: $M = 44$ years, $SD = 8.8$ years) recruited from business organizations, in which the third author offered professional workshops. The experiment was not part of those workshops. Sample size was determined following the same rule as in Experiment 1. However, the number of participants was above the predetermined number per condition than required by power analysis. Table 2 presents participants' demographics in the four conditions. There were no significant differences among groups of participants in the four experimental conditions.

Measures

A moment-by-moment perception. We used Perception Analyzer™ to continually measure perceived charisma. The Perception Analyzer is a hand-held device used to track participants' second-by-second reactions to various stimuli (see, for example, Nagel, Maurer, & Reinemann, 2012; Tedesco, 2002). Participants held a dial with a digital display and were asked to move the dial clockwise (toward 100) or counterclockwise (toward 0) according to the amount of charisma they perceived at any moment. The initial value displayed was 50, and any change in the dial was presented on the digital display. The frequency of data recording was 1 s and resulted in 517 to 530 data points.

Manipulation check. Manipulation check was identical to Experiment 1. We tested reliability again and found Cronbach's alpha of .86 for the *content* questionnaire, and Cronbach's alpha of .89 for the *delivery* questionnaire.

Charisma. Charisma was also measured as in Experiment 1. Overall perceived charisma was measured to test the general impression that one formed after viewing the whole speech. It allows a comparison with previous and future studies.

Table 2. Experiment 2: Participants' Demographics in the Four Conditions.

	Strong delivery		Weak delivery	
	Visionary content	Non-visionary content	Visionary content	Non-visionary content
N	25	37	27	28
Age (SD) in years	40.92 (6.35)	46.16 (9.51)	41.81 (8.84)	43.93 (9.08)
Gender (% women)	56.0	37.8	66.7	57.1
Children (SD)	2.44 (1.08)	2.81 (1.49)	2.59 (0.75)	2.04 (1.11)
Children in middle or high school (SD)	0.48 (0.71)	0.62 (0.83)	0.30 (0.61)	0.36 (0.78)
Education (% university graduates)	92.0	75.6	92.6	89.3
Religiosity (% nonreligious)	48.0	45.9	70.4	78.6

Intention to enroll. A single question was used to test the hypothetical possibility that the participants would choose the school for their (hypothetical) child if they perceived the principal as charismatic. This question was intended to test the validity of perceived charisma, assuming that the more the school principal is perceived charismatic, the more the participants would “follow” him, expressing an intention to enroll “their” child to the school. As such, this question intended to simulate an outcome of charisma. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they wanted “their” child to study in a school led by the principal they had just observed. A 4-point scale was used, ranging from “not at all” to “very much.”

Procedure

The experiment was conducted in groups of 4 to 30 participants. The groups were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. First, the experimenter explained how to use the Perception Analyzer’s dial. After completing the demographic questionnaire, the experimenter introduced the video clip in a similar way as in the preliminary experiment, and explained how to continuously use the dial while watching the video.

To assure that the participants remember to continually report perceived charisma whereas watching the video clip, every 2 min the experimenter reminded the participants not to forget to adjust the dial position to their current feeling. At the end of the video clip, the participants answered a question regarding their intention to enroll their child in this new school; they filled out the charisma questionnaire and completed the manipulation check questionnaire. Finally, the experimenter debriefed the participants.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Participants who watched strong *delivery* rated it higher than participants who watched weak *delivery* ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 0.67$; $M = 0.84$, $SD = 0.51$, respectively), mean difference = 1.35, 95% CI = [1.13, 1.57], $t(115) = 12.13$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 3.15$, indicating that the difference between strong and weak *delivery* is significant. Participants who watched the visionary *content* rated it higher than participants who watched the non-visionary *content* ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.91$; $M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.88$, respectively), mean difference = .43, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.76], $t(115) = 2.61$, $p < .01$, Cohen’s $d = 0.49$, indicating that the difference between visionary and non-visionary *content* is significant.

A moment-by-moment perceived charisma. Figure 2 presents the average perceived charisma under the four experimental conditions. As clearly shown in

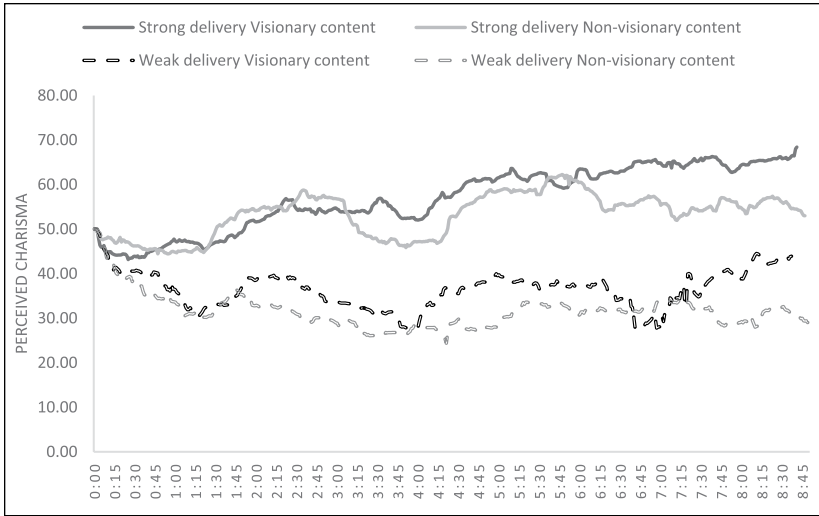


Figure 2. A moment-by-moment track of the impact of delivery and content on perceived charisma—Experiment 2.

Note. For convenience purposes, the time track is presented in 15-s intervals.

Figure 2, the effect of delivery is immediate—strong delivery results in gradual increase in the participants’ perceived charisma of the principal, whereas weak delivery results in gradual decrease in perceived charisma. With regard to content, only after about 2 min we observed differences between visionary and non-visionary content. This pattern of results supports Hypothesis 2 that delivery influences perceived charisma quickly, whereas the influence of content is lagged behind.

Visually, the data seem to fit our anticipated growth curves (depicted in Figure 1). In the following, we will test the statistical fit of possible growth curves. We had no a-priori theoretical hypothesis regarding the mathematical growth function. Thus, this analysis is more descriptive in nature. However, knowing the shape of curves may inform us *if* and *when* change in perceived charisma has occurred. The pattern of the curves may also be compared with what was predicted by the underlying theory, and it may shed light on the expected *timing of the effect* of each of the two variables—delivery and vision.

As Figure 2 shows, perceived charisma in a strong delivery and visionary content condition may follow a logarithmic-like growth, and a mirror pattern may be obtained in a weak delivery and non-visionary content condition, resulting in an inverse logarithmic-like growth. For strong delivery and non-visionary content condition, we may find a polynomial growth. A mirror pattern may be seen for a weak delivery and visionary content condition.

To test the curves' pattern, as well as to test the main hypotheses, we used multilevel modeling. The Level 1 model refers to the within-participant or intra-individual change in perception of charisma (i.e., repeated measurements over time). It describes the changes for each participant (i.e., variation within participant over time), estimates the average within-person initial status (intercept) and the rate of change over time (slope). The Level 2 model denotes whether the slope varies across participants in a systematic way, that is—as a result of condition. The growth parameters (i.e., within-participant intercepts and slope) of Level 1 are the outcome variables to be predicted by the between-participant variables at Level 2.

We first ran an intercept-only model to estimate the between-participant effect. The Level 1 model describes participants' perceived charisma as a function of the mean perceived charisma for a condition plus a residual that reflects individual participant differences around a given condition mean. The Level 2 model describes mean perceived charisma for a given condition as a function of the grand mean plus a condition-specific deviation. We found interclass correlation (ICC) of .663, which suggests that 66.3% of the total perceived charisma variability may be due to differences among conditions.

Next, we compared four individual growth trajectories: In the first model, time was modeled as a linear change, and in the second and third models, we tested polynomial effects: We added a quadratic rate of change (in the second model) and a cubic rate of change (in the third model). Last, in the fourth, time was modeled as log linear change. This comparison was performed separately for each condition.

For all four conditions, the logarithmic curve had the highest information criteria, and thus had the worse fit, followed by the linear model, the linear plus quadratic model, and the smallest information criteria were obtained for the linear plus quadratic plus cubic model, which was significantly better than all the others: $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 7.93$ to $3,481.85$, $p < .001$, Δ Akaike information criterion (AIC) = 5.92 to $3,477.86$, $p < .001$, Δ Bayesian information criterion (BIC) = 1.62 to $3,402.40$, $p < .001$. Thus, the change in perceived charisma is not monotonous (i.e., linear), nor logarithmic, but polynomial—which in simplified way means that the perceived charisma changes in a different rate and in a different “direction” along the time axis (see Figure 2). We ascribe these changes to the interactive effects of delivery (immediate and relatively rapid effect) and vision (gradual and slow effect that if not aligned with the effect of delivery may change the course of perceived charisma).

Whereas the cubic curve has the best fit for all conditions, it does not disprove the prediction that perceived charisma is influenced by the interaction between time and conditions. To test the effect of the conditions on the shape of individual growth trajectories, we tested the effects of time and of two

variables—delivery and vision, as well as all their interactions, to explore differences in change over time among conditions (i.e., interaction with time). For this analysis, time was modeled as in the third model with a cubic trend. Delivery and vision were dummy variables, in which strong delivery was coded as 1 and weak delivery was coded as -1 . Similarly, visionary content was coded as 1, and non-visionary content was coded as -1 .

The results of the multilevel modeling are presented in Table 3. The predicted results, based on the parameters estimates are presented in the appendix (Figure A1).

The data analysis suggests that perceived charisma has significantly changed over time. Delivery, vision, and their interaction significantly interacted with time, suggesting different trajectories for each condition. There was no main effect of delivery, vision, or a simple interaction between them. In addition, as the significant Wald Z reveals, there was also a significant difference among individuals in rate of change (Wald Z for the slope = 7.613). There was also a significant difference in intercept and a negative correlation between slope and intercept. The negative correlation is interpreted as an interaction—the rate of change in perceived charisma for those with a lower intercept is faster than that of those with a higher intercept. This could be due in part to the differences among the four conditions. Together, these analyses supported Hypothesis 2 (delivery dominance, larger estimates for delivery by time interactions than for vision by time interactions) and Hypothesis 3 (the updating perception when delivery and vision are misaligned, as seen in Figure 2 and is supported by the delivery by content by time interactions). An alternative statistical analysis of these data using repeated measure ANOVA revealed similar findings (see appendix).

Overall perceived charisma. A second measure used is the overall perceived charisma, in which participants rated the charisma of the principal on the MLQ's charisma items. Two-way ANOVA with content and delivery as between-subject factors revealed significant main of delivery, $F(1, 113) = 55.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .33$. Participants who watched a strong delivery rated the principal as more charismatic than participants who watched a weak delivery ($M = 2.31, SD = 0.76; M = 1.43, SD = 0.67$, respectively). A significant main effect of content was also found, $F(1, 113) = 19.93, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .15$. Visionary content led participants to rate the principal as more charismatic than non-visionary content ($M = 2.17, SD = 0.77; M = 1.69, SD = 0.84$, respectively). The content by delivery interaction was not significant, $F(1, 113) = 0.20, n.s$. These results are consistent with those obtained with the moment-by-moment measure, replicating the results of the preliminary experiment and confirming H1.

Table 3. Experiment 2: Multilevel Modeling—Parameter Estimates.

Parameter	Estimate	SE	df	t	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Fixed effects							
Intercept	44.04	1.03	120.88	42.87	.00	42.01	46.08
TIME	-0.04	0.00	249.69	-9.62	.00	-0.051	-0.04
TIME ²	0.00	0.00	61,205.99	20.50	.00	0.00	0.00
TIME ³	0.00	0.00	61,205.99	-18.12	.00	0.00	0.00
Delivery	0.87	1.03	120.88	0.85	.40	-1.16	2.91
Vision	-1.09	1.03	120.88	-1.06	.29	-3.12	0.95
Delivery × Vision	-0.06	1.03	120.88	-0.06	.95	-2.10	1.97
TIME × Delivery	0.09	0.00	249.69	19.62	.00	0.08	0.09
TIME × Vision	0.03	0.00	249.69	7.07	.00	0.02	0.04
TIME × Delivery × Vision	-0.02	0.00	249.69	-5.15	.00	-0.03	-0.01
TIME ² × Delivery	-0.00	0.00	61,205.99	-17.95	.00	-0.00	-0.00
TIME ² × Vision	-0.00	0.00	61,205.99	-10.22	.00	-0.00	-0.00
TIME ² × Delivery × Vision	0.00	0.00	61,205.99	10.96	.00	0.00	0.00
TIME ³ × Delivery	0.00	0.00	61,205.99	10.29	.00	0.00	0.00
TIME ³ × Vision	0.00	0.00	61,205.99	10.84	.00	0.00	0.00
TIME ³ × Delivery × Vision	0.00	0.00	61,205.99	-10.77	.00	0.00	0.00
Wald Z							
Random effects							
Residual	83.89	0.48		174.94	.00	82.89	84.77
Intercept + TIME [Subject = ID]							
UN (1,1)	118.23	15.54		7.61	.00	91.38	152.97
UN (2,1)	-0.13	0.04		-3.16	.00	-0.21	-0.05
UN (2,2)	0.00	0.00		7.61	.00	0.00	0.00

Notes. TIME² is the quadratic rate of change, TIME³ is the cubic rate of change. UN = unstructured covariance matrix.

Intention to enroll. Does perceived charisma correlate with intention to act? This correlation was computed within each group and then pooled across groups. We used the varying-coefficient meta-analysis method (Bonett, 2010) to combine the coefficients and compute a CI for the average. A significant

positive correlation was found between overall perceived charisma and intention to enroll a child in the school led by the principal, Average $r = .63$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [.34, .80]. As above, two-way ANOVA with content and delivery as between-subject factors revealed a significant main effect of delivery, $F(1, 113) = 30.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$. The intention to enroll was higher among participants who watched the strong delivery than among those who watched the weak one ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.09$; $M = 1.49$, $SD = 0.90$, respectively). A significant main effect of content was also found, $F(1, 113) = 23.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. The intention to enroll was higher among participants who watched the visionary content presentation than among participants who watched the non-visionary content ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.97$; $M = 1.62$, $SD = 1.07$, respectively). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 113) = 0.48$, n.s.

General Discussion

In two experiments, we manipulated content and delivery and tested their impact on perceived charisma, a vital characteristic of influential leaders (Antonakis, Fenley, & Liechti, 2011; Böhm, Dwertmann, Bruch, & Shamir, 2015; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999). We demonstrated the unique impact of delivery and content, and replicated the dominance of the former over the latter that was found in previous studies. The main contribution of the current study is in tracking perceived charisma over time, showing that delivery formed an immediate impression whereas content lags behind. We ascribe the delivery dominance over content to the instantaneous judgment that anchors the perception of charisma, which may later be updated.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of the current study demonstrated the differential operation of two modes of processing when perceiving charisma. To date, dual-process models have received “spotty treatment” from leadership scholars (Brown, 2013, p. 116). We found that immediate impression is based on a rapid processing of the delivery. This impression is modified after a while according to the output of processing content, which is assumed to be slower. If delivery and content are aligned, the first impression of the speaker as “charismatic” or “non-charismatic” is generally confirmed over time. This is because the two modes of processing conclude with similar outcomes. In contrast, if delivery and content are misaligned, the first impression of the speaker as “charismatic” or “non-charismatic” is updated and changed.

We revealed the dynamics of perceived charisma resulting from the interplay between the rapid process that requires low mental efforts (System 1 processing) and the slow, deliberative process that demands high mental efforts (System 2 processing). We suggested that delivery is processed rapidly and generates the first impression, whereas content is processed slowly and provides either compatible or incompatible perception. Whereas such distinction has already been identified (Brown, 2013), the current study provides an empirical support and contributes to the understanding of *how* the two processes operate and interact *over time*.

The notion of two modes of processing has been criticized for being too vague for aligning two misaligned cognitive systems with a cluster of defining attributes (Melnikoff & Bargh, 2018). It has also been claimed that there is actually a continuum rather than discrete types of processing, and that a single process theory can account for the data, which by themselves are ambiguous or unconvincing (e.g., Keren & Schul, 2009; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011; Osman, 2004; see Evans & Stanovich, 2013, for an elaborated discussion). The current experimental results cannot resolve this dual versus unified system debate. Nevertheless, they do clearly show that delivery and content—the two components that form the perception of charisma—operate, and are probably processed, at different speeds.

Previous studies (e.g., Bonner & Newell, 2010; De Neys, 2012; Evans, 2007) examined whether resolving contradictory judgments made by System 1 and System 2 processing reflects parallel or serial processing. The current research findings cannot settle this dispute because the delayed influence that resulted from System 2 does not necessarily prove that it either started later or that the two processes operated in parallel. From neuropsychological literature, we know that visual information is processed at a faster rate than auditory and that it dominates auditory information when both types of information are presented simultaneously (e.g., Colavita, 1974; Van Damme et al., 2009). However, to conclude that this relationship results from serial decision judgment requires further research.

Framing perceived charisma within a dual-process theory may allow explaining the dominance of delivery over content found in previous studies (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Johnson & Dipboye, 2008; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996). It is suggested that the rapid processing mode that extracts a decision according to the delivery anchors the judgment of the speaker as “charismatic” or “non-charismatic.” However, “anchoring” is an interpretation of the outcome of a decision. We suggest delving into the process or mechanism that leads to that decision. We contend that the first instantaneous impression does not lend itself to proof or refutation that is slowly created by the slow processing mode. Rather, it is suggested that the

quick processing mode continually produces outcomes. To influence the first decision, the content analysis (which occurred slowly) should have a highly powerful contribution. Otherwise, the impact of System 2 processing may remain small. This is especially true in the case of misalignment between delivery and content.

In real life, followers do not listen to a speech and explicitly ask themselves how charismatic the speaker is. Thus, one may question whether our methodology, where the participants monitored the degree to which a speaker was charismatic moment-by-moment, did not by itself give superiority to delivery over content. We may rule-out this possible artifact by comparing the results of Experiment 1 with the results of Experiment 2. In Experiment 1, the judgment was made only at the end of the presentation; therefore, it may be used as a reference to test the general impression that it is not confounded by the moment-by-moment monitoring. Because a very similar pattern of results was found in Experiment 2, we suppose that the ongoing evaluation of charisma has minimal effect if any.

Our current findings contribute to the research on charisma, a concept that has remained throughout the years “elusive” (Conger, Kanungo, & Associates, 1988), “the divine origin beyond our material world” (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992, p. 119), and “an ill-defined and ill-measured gift” (Antonakis et al., 2016). To answer the question, whether charisma can be taught, Antonakis et al. (2011) used Charismatic Leadership Tactics (CLT), which are “very potent devices that affect followers’ emotions and information processing” (p. 376). The tactics that charismatic leaders use to influence followers depend on the content, the verbal facet, and the “delivery mode,” the nonverbal aspect (Antonakis et al., 2011). Our study findings stress the importance and power of delivery and its immediate impact on one’s perceived charisma by illuminating the dynamic relationship between System 1 and System 2 processing, representing delivery and content, and how they interrelate over time.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The current research aimed to examine the development of perceived charisma over time to shed light on the specific situations in which perception is based on the incompatibility between content and delivery. These occurrences are often overlooked in the research on charisma. We attempted to test to what extent the immediate impression of the speaker—a mean to impact one’s perception (Peck & Hogue, 2018)—is updated following revealing that the message and the delivery are misaligned. Thus, our focus in this study was on the timing of the perceived charisma evolution, which indeed was

over a short and restricted time. Consequently, although many other variables, apart from delivery and vision, may influence this process such as the determinants of charismatic content and vision themes (Sosik & Dinger, 2007), they were beyond the scope of the current study. Future research should take into consideration other factors that may affect perceived charisma, which is an elusive phenomenon (Conger et al., 1988).

We would like to address some limitations of this research. First, as in many similar studies, we used simulation: The leader was a trained actor, and the members of the audience were asked to imagine that they are in a relevant setting. The fact that the experiment is a simulation may question the authentic involvement and genuine motivation that the participants exhibited. In addition, in the scenario, the participants imagined they were parents listening to a speech from a high school principal. It might be that the participants were relatively unmotivated to process the content of the speech, and this could explain the stronger relative effects of delivery over content. Assuming that high involvement may cause content dominance over delivery (e.g., Nagel et al., 2012), one may expect earlier, and perhaps stronger, influence of content among involved participants. Future research should take into account the moderating role of involvement in the relationship between the presentation and perceived charisma. In addition, one may examine under what conditions delivery may have a lesser impact on participants than content. For example, when the content is conceived as highly relevant to the participants (e.g., critical information regarding an organizational crisis), it may have more impact on perceived charisma compared with delivery (similarly to the effect of relevant information in persuasion, Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Second, the present study employed an experimental design that perhaps cannot be fully generalized to real-world or field setting. For example, it is possible that the effect of content in laboratory experiments is smaller than in real-world leadership situation. To that point, Venus, Stam, and van Knippenberg (2013) argued that testing the interplay of several variables in the field is likely to be accompanied by confounding of effects. In contrast, laboratory experiments allow one to deconstruct the effects of the variables. Another concern might be that we demonstrated how people are impressed over a short period of time, which is not the case between leaders and followers in a working setting. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in many modern organizational settings, leaders and followers do not have tangible contacts, and their relationships are based on short, infrequent, and sometimes distant interactions. Future studies should consider conducting a field setting type of research that will examine the effects of visionary/non-visionary content and strong/weak delivery on the audience's perceptions of the presenter's charisma.

Third, the study results could be affected by the participants' implicit theories of charismatic leadership (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Lord & Maher, 1991; Martinko et al., 2018). Data on the participants' mental model were not collected. Assuming that people differ in their implicit theories of charismatic leadership, we relied on a random allocation to the experiments' conditions; therefore, participants' implicit theory of leadership was not expected to intervene in a systematic way with the effects of delivery and vision that were the focus of the current study. Furthermore, we did not ask the participants to provide a definition of charisma, nor did we examine whether the participants' mental models of charisma were valid and reliable. To better understand charisma, future research should consider these factors that may affect one's perceived charisma of the leader.

We have three notes on methodological limitations. First, we found relatively large effect size for delivery and only a moderate effect size for content. The difference between the sizes of the two main effects should be interpreted carefully. It might be that the powerful impact of delivery is not because it was processed at a faster rate, but rather because it was more distinguishable. Nonetheless, as was shown in numerous previous studies (Brown, 2013), analyzing content requires investing mental effort; thus, it clearly requires more time than processing delivery.

Second, our study samples comprised predominantly women. Similar gender distribution was reported in previous studies that tested delivery and vision (e.g., Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Johnson & Dipboye, 2008). Examination of the research literature regarding gender differences in perceiving charisma among followers showed no differences (e.g., Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Ayman, Korabik, & Morris, 2009; Carless, 1998; Felfe & Schyns, 2010; Schyns & Sanders, 2007; Stempel, Rigotti, & Mohr, 2015; Vinkenburg, Van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). We recommend conducting a systematic study that will scrutinize the potential impact of gender on perceptions of charisma.

Last, Antonakis (2017) warned about making unfair comparisons in which the groups face different task demands. A solution for this problem may be to use a control or neutral condition. A future study should consider including a control/neutral delivery and control/neutral vision conditions to estimate more adequately their impact on perceived charisma in relation to the other conditions.

Practical Implications

A number of implications of the current findings are notable. First, for delivering a short presentation, one should be endowed with extraordinary

delivery skills to be perceived as charismatic. As was indicated by Holladay and Coombs (1993, 1994), delivery “seems to be essential to the creation of visions and the attribution of charisma to leaders” (Holladay & Coombs, 1994, p. 184). Our research clearly reaffirms the importance of good delivery skills, which may be acquired through professional training programs (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2011). The second is, “don’t judge a book by its cover.” An audience must be cautious when introduced to a “charismatic” leader as this person may unveil the “dark side” of his or her leadership (Conger, 1990). In some instances, leaders may rely too heavily on the bias uncovered in the current research, where delivery is favored over content, and System 2 does not do enough to override System 1. In those cases, followers of charismatic leaders may think less critically about the leader and his or her vision, leaving them subject to manipulation and misuse (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). Furthermore, such a charismatic leader may exploit his or her interpersonal power for self-enhancement and personal gain (personalized power) rather than use it for the sake of the followers and the organization (socialized power; Howell, 1988; Howell & Shamir, 2005). As we showed, good delivery may shadow the details of a message and cause followers to be indifferent to the vision portrayed by the leader.

Conclusion

Scholars examining the perception of charisma have marked its crucial role for influential leadership across a variety of disciplines. This research focuses on the relative impact of delivery and content and examines the differential processing speed each of them contributes to perceived charisma. The results suggest that because delivery is processed faster than the content, it gains dominance in perceiving charisma. This immediate impression may be updated if the content and the delivery are misaligned. The significant contribution of the study is in applying a social cognition approach and implementing a dual-process framework to understand people’s formation of perceived charisma. The current findings emphasize the importance of continuous research of this topic of interest, as well as the potential implications of delivery and content qualities on perceiving charisma.

Appendix

Experiment 2: Repeated Measures ANOVA

For each participant, we averaged the perceived charisma at intervals of 1 min, resulting in nine data points. A $2 \times 2 \times 9$ repeated-measures ANOVA

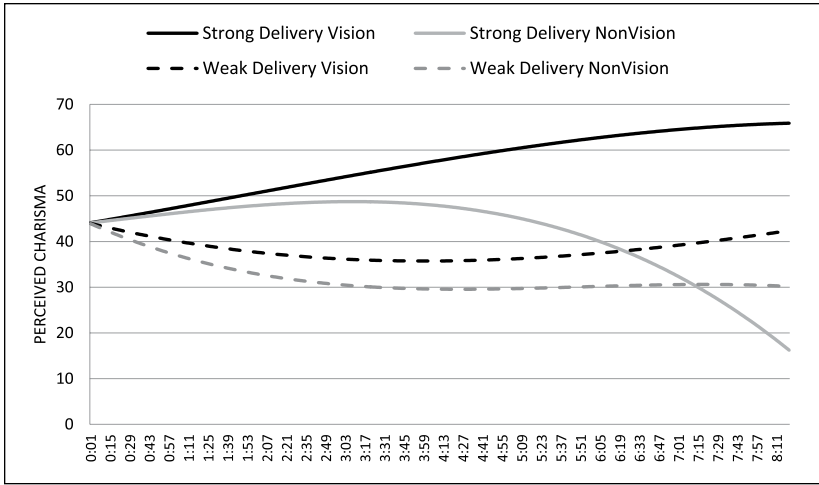


Figure A1. Predicted results, based on Experiment 2 parameters.

was carried out, in which content and delivery were between-subject factors and time was a within-subject factor. We found a significant main effect of content, $F(1, 113) = 3.61, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$. Perceived charisma was higher when the content was visionary relative to non-visionary ($M = 46.32, SD = 15.26; M = 43.95, SD = 17.23$, respectively). The main effect of delivery was also significant, $F(1, 113) = 78.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .41$. Perceived charisma was higher when strong delivery was watched relative to weak delivery ($M = 54.76, SD = 11.90; M = 34.01, SD = 13.50$, respectively). Both variables were interacted with time: Content by time interaction— $F(8, 904) = 4.27, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$, delivery by time interaction— $F(8, 904) = 15.28, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$. The content by delivery interaction was not significant, $F(1, 113) < 1$, nor was the content by delivery by time interaction, $F(8, 904) = 1.56, p = .13$.

Experiment 2: Predicted Results

Figure A1 presents the observed results under the four conditions, based on the parameter estimates presented in Table 3. Interpretation of these predictions should be taken with caution as they are based on one sample only. Nevertheless, the two “aligned” conditions (strong delivery visionary content; weak delivery non-visionary content) show the expected pattern: increase or decrease percepts. The two “misaligned” conditions also followed

the expected pattern—both started as expected by the delivery impression and later changed direction according to the content of the vision. It seems that in the strong delivery non-visionary content the effect of content is very strong, whereas in the weak delivery visionary content this is not the case. This finding may be an effect of the specific content used in the present study. Further experimental examinations should be conducted before coming to conclusions in this regard.

Authors' Note

The authors declare that they have reported how sample size was determined, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations, and all measures in the study.


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ORCID iD

Ronit Bogler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9484-974X>

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Author Biographies

Avner Caspi is a senior lecturer at the Education & Psychology department, the Open University of Israel. His major research and publications interests focus on social aspects of communication, mainly in the area of learning and instruction technologies.

Ronit Bogler is an associate professor and Head of the Program in Educational Administration, Policy & Leadership at the Open University of Israel. Her research interests include educational leadership, commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, empowerment and job satisfaction.

Ofir Tzuman received his MA degree from the Open University of Israel. He is an expert in presentation, and teaches presentation skills in some Israeli academic institutes.