Rhetorical Strategies in Advocacy Communication: Analysing Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in BDS Malaysia's Press Releases

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Abstract

As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict escalated between 2023 and 2024, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) emerged as a pivotal non-state actor, using boycott campaigns to influence Malaysian socio-economic discourse. Despite their significant impact, the formal rhetorical strategies employed in their advocacy communication remain under-researched in the Southeast Asian context. This study examines how BDS Malaysia crafts persuasive messaging to mobilize public support and influence policy. Grounded in Aristotle's rhetorical theory, the study utilizes qualitative rhetorical analysis to examine 19 purposively sampled press releases from BDS Malaysia's official website. The analysis evaluates the rhetorical situation speaker, audience, exigence, and purpose alongside the deployment of ethos, pathos, and logos. Findings indicate that pathos is the primary appeal, leveraging emotionally charged narratives to elicit moral indignation. Ethos follows, establishing credibility through shared values and international legal norms. Logos, while least frequent, provides factual substantiation via legal-political precedents. Strategies are notably tailored to specific audiences, including policymakers and corporations, to maximize persuasiveness. This research reaffirms the relevance of Aristotelian frameworks in contemporary digital advocacy. It offers practical insights for social movements to design ethically anchored messages that transcend cultural and political divides.

Keywords: Rhetorical Analysis, Social Movement Organizations, Press Releases, Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals, Advocacy Communication

Introduction

Inspired by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement was first launched in 2005 and advocates for nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law (What Is BDS, n.d.). Its three primary demands are: (1) an end to the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands, (2) full equality for Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, and (3) the recognition of the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in accordance with United Nations Resolution 194 (What Is BDS, n.d.).

These demands form the cornerstone of a rights-based approach to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and BDS has since evolved into a decentralized yet globally coordinated movement. Indeed, BDS are important tools for change in the face of prolonged repression, as they can isolate oppressive governments, prevent them from normalizing their relations with the outside world, and cut off important channels of global support for their continued practices (Duncan, 2016). In addition, BDS provides a platform for grassroots activism that translates individual and collective power into direct confrontation with Israeli behaviour (Awad, 2020).

Today, BDS has expanded far beyond its Palestinian origins and gained the support of labour unions, academic associations, church groups, student networks, and international human rights organizations (What Is BDS, n.d.). The movement's influence is visible in a wide range of actions from cultural and academic boycotts to economic divestments from companies complicit in Israeli occupation, and political lobbying to impose military embargoes and diplomatic sanctions (Feuerherdt, 2021). These strategies have been adopted not only in majority-Muslim countries but also in secular and Western contexts where human rights discourses are prominent.

The rise of the BDS movement in Muslim-majority countries can be understood in relation to broader socio-cultural and moral frameworks (Nasir, 2016). Muslim-led boycotts are less about theological mandates and more a reflection of popular Islam as a moral and political force. These movements often intersect with global moral consumerism, where the purchase or refusal to purchase certain products becomes an act of ethical protest (Nasir, 2016). While the economic impact of such boycotts is sometimes debated, their symbolic significance in asserting Muslim identity, solidarity, and resistance is substantial (Nasir, 2016).

However, the appeal of the BDS movement is not confined to Islamic contexts. In recent years, its influence has grown within secular societies and liberal democracies. In countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Belgium, BDS campaigns have gained traction within universities, labor unions, and city councils. For instance, student-led divestment campaigns have emerged across numerous campuses, including those at the University of Exeter and several University of California branches (Al Jazeera, 2024). In Belgium, municipalities such as Liège and Anderlecht even passed resolutions supporting the boycott of goods from illegal Israeli settlements, reflecting BDS's penetration into European political discourse (The Brussels Times, 2023). These examples underscore the growing resonance of BDS as a transnational movement rooted in principles of international law, anti-colonialism, and human rights.

The escalation of violence and humanitarian crisis in Gaza beginning on October 7, 2023, dramatically intensified public support for the BDS movement across the globe. In response to widespread outrage over Israeli military actions, boycott campaigns targeting global brands perceived to support or normalize Israeli policies increased. Major Western corporations such as McDonald's, Starbucks, and PepsiCo witnessed significant backlash. For example, reports cited a marked decline in revenue from Middle Eastern and Muslim-majority countries, including Malaysia and Indonesia, in early 2024 (Rajvanshi & Serhan, 2024). Besides, KFC Malaysia reported the closure of 108 outlets by April 2024, directly linked to consumer boycotts (The Star, 2024). These developments highlight the tangible economic consequences

of collective political action through boycotts and signal the mobilizing power of public sentiment when aligned with effective advocacy.

Since its inception in 2015, BDS Malaysia has become a prominent non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to raising awareness of the Palestinian struggle among Malaysians and leading Muslims to stand in solidarity with Palestinians. The organization has developed and executed a series of boycott campaigns targeting companies such as Hyundai, Caterpillar, and Puma, which it alleges are complicit in supporting Israeli policies. Notably, their boycott of Giant gained significant attention in 2017, when clothing products labeled with barcodes of Israeli companies were found for sale in Giant supermarkets in Johor. In response, the organization launched a boycott against Giant Supermarket, which ultimately agreed to remove these products from all its outlets, marking a major victory for BDS Malaysia.

With the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza, particularly following the surge of Israeli military operations in October 2023, BDS Malaysia has reasserted itself as a key voice in Malaysian civil society. As of September 29, 2024, official data indicates that more than 41,500 Palestinians in Gaza have died as a result of Israeli military air and artillery strikes (Reuters, 2024). The large number of casualties has sparked intense public sentiment regarding the Palestinian cause. In response to the recent crisis, BDS Malaysia has frequently organized campaigns and street protests nationwide while compiling a list of entities to boycott due to their alleged support for Zionism. They have also initiated petitions calling on the Malaysian government and other institutions to adopt a stronger stance against Israel's actions and to support Palestinian rights. The scale of these protests and boycotts has captured the attention of politicians, including the U.S. Ambassador and Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, particularly because of the significant financial losses and other negative impacts resulting from the BDS movement. Through such campaigns, BDS Malaysia seeks not only to foster solidarity with Palestinians but also to reshape public discourse, influence state policy, and raise critical awareness about corporate complicity in international injustice.

A central tool in the organization's communication strategy is its use of online press releases. Unlike traditional press releases issued by corporate or governmental organizations, which are typically disseminated through intermediaries like news agencies and subject to editorial gatekeeping, BDS Malaysia publishes its press releases directly on its official website and shares them through its social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. These digital press releases are publicly accessible, not filtered by third parties, and can be disseminated instantly and widely, giving the organization complete control over its messaging. This gatekeeper-free communication model allows BDS Malaysia to frame narratives on its own terms and ensures immediacy and consistency in its outreach. Non-state actors like BDS Malaysia leverage these online press releases not only to inform but to persuade and mobilize. Unlike conventional press releases that aim to communicate neutral or promotional information about corporate developments or institutional policies, BDS Malaysia's press releases are often ideologically charged, activist-oriented, and strategically framed to elicit moral and emotional engagement. They serve as rhetorical tools to assert legitimacy, challenge dominant political narratives, and call for action.

In Malaysia, the BDS movement has rapidly gained traction, amplified by digital platforms, independent media, and grassroots campaigns. Press releases from BDS Malaysia which widely circulated through social media and occasionally cited in mainstream media have reflect a calculated effort to influence both public opinion and policy decisions. The movement has received support from activists, political leaders, and religious institutions, positioning itself not just as a moral response to global injustice but as a strategic actor in Malaysia's civil society landscape. As a result, the BDS movement has had a measurable impact on public discourse, consumer behavior, and national conversations surrounding foreign policy and ethical responsibility.

Today, the key messages and narratives of the BDS movement are increasingly capturing the attention of Malaysians. The Internet has become a powerful tool for global social movements, profoundly influencing people's views, especially those of Muslims worldwide. Traditionally, press releases have served as a bridge between businesses, news media professionals, and the public. However, in recent decades, digital technology has changed the role of the press release, allowing organizations to post information directly on websites and communicate with anyone interested in their cause (Wickman, 2013). It emphasizes that press releases are "an important tool for shaping and repairing the corporate image, as they are closely related to issue framing and agenda setting." Similarly, Marcotte & Stokowski (2021) argue that messages posted on online platforms should be viewed as intentional language designed to evoke meaning, emotion, and action. Online platforms have become crucial in raising awareness of boycott movements and persuading audiences to participate in online and offline activities (Hitchcock, 2016). These platforms have helped the boycott movement in Malaysia to expand its reach and mobilize public support for the cause.

This study is positioned within the contemporary transformation of advocacy communication, in which digital media environments increasingly shape how organizations and movement actors articulate claims, establish legitimacy, and mobilize publics during politically contested events. In this context, advocacy texts should be understood not only as channels of information dissemination but also as persuasive communicative forms that organize interpretation, justify positions, and orient audiences toward particular responses. Recent scholarship indicates that online media can facilitate large-scale collective action and expand the mobilizing capacity of movement communication (Chen et al., 2021), while social media-based activism also supports participatory engagement and the circulation of advocacy narratives across networked publics (Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). Complementing this, rhetorical research demonstrates that public-facing organizational discourse often relies on the strategic interplay of credibility, emotional appeal, and logical justification to influence audience judgment and reinforce legitimacy (Alkaraan et al., 2022; Marcotte & Stokowski, 2021). Against this broader social and communicative backdrop, BDS Malaysia constitutes a theoretically relevant case as a non-state advocacy actor operating within a highly contested geopolitical issue and employing press releases as both informational and persuasive instruments. This relevance is further underscored by recent rhetorical scholarship on BDS-related discourse, which shows how advocacy language is used to frame Palestinian rights claims and shape public positioning (Hitchcock, 2023). Accordingly, examining the deployment of ethos, pathos, and logos in BDS Malaysia's press releases provides a useful lens for understanding how advocacy organizations in the Malaysian context construct legitimacy, mobilize support, and localize transnational political communication.

BDS Malaysia has published numerous press releases and has frequently been cited by media outlets. Yet, despite its efforts, public responses to its messaging remain divided, particularly as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continues to escalate. While the press releases are carefully crafted to convey specific narratives and frame public understanding in alignment with the movement's objectives, they have occasionally been misinterpreted or have given rise to unintended consequences. Notably, the boycott movement has been associated with various social tensions, including incidents of vandalism and harassment. For instance, major brands such as Starbucks and McDonald's have reported incidents of vandalism in Malaysia as a result of the boycott movement (Free Malaysia Today, 2024).

The selection of this topic is justified by both its contemporary relevance and its theoretical significance in advocacy communication research. Contemporary advocacy is increasingly conducted in digitally networked environments where organizations and movement actors must not only disseminate information but also compete to shape public interpretation, legitimacy, and collective response (López-Rabadán, 2022; Mendelsohn et al., 2024; Cheng et al., 2024). While past studies have established the importance of framing and rhetorical meaning-making in public communication and social movements (Entman, 1993; Benford & Snow, 2000), recent research also shows that social media environments intensify the contestation of movement narratives across multiple actors and communication roles (Mendelsohn et al., 2024). At the same time, studies on BDS-related discourse have begun to examine rhetorical framing, but this work has largely focused on student-generated advocacy discourse rather than official organizational communication (Hitchcock, 2023). This leaves a clear gap in understanding how advocacy organizations themselves construct persuasive claims through formal communication genres. The gap is particularly important because press releases remain a strategic and persuasive form of organizational communication, yet existing scholarship has more often examined press releases in corporate or media-relations contexts rather than in politically contested advocacy campaigns (Liu & Zhang, 2021; Abu Arqoub & Dwikat, 2023). Accordingly, analysing BDS Malaysia's press releases provides a timely and necessary contribution by addressing an underexplored genre, a non-Western advocacy context, and the rhetorical mechanisms through which transnational political claims are localized for Malaysian publics.

Understanding the mechanics of rhetoric enables audiences to critically evaluate persuasive messages, discern credible sources, and assess the validity of arguments. While previous studies have explored the role of social media and press releases in enabling collective action and mobilizing activism (Chen et al., 2021; Greijdanus et al. 2020; Hitchcock, 2016; Jenzen et al. 2020; Leong et al. 2020; Panait, 2014), there is still a huge gap in understanding their rhetorical functions in social movements, especially in the context of Malaysia and its evolving BDS dynamics. As Hitchcock (2020) suggests, the BDS movement is often uniquely characterized as threatening and anti-Semitic, setting it apart from other civil rights movements. This highlights the need to investigate the specific rhetorical challenges faced by those who support the BDS movement, their strategies for overcoming these obstacles, and the factors that influence the success or failure of their efforts to raise awareness and promote advocacy.

Several studies have also explored the rhetorical discourse of the BDS movement across platforms (Chaitin et al. 2017; Hitchcock 2023; Quer 2020), but there is a lack of research on

how press releases are strategically used to shape discourses and manage social identities in contested movements. Despite their potential influence, press releases have not been a prominent focus in previous studies, leading to an underestimation of their role in mobilizing movements. To fully understand the impact of press releases in modern social movements like BDS, it is essential to analyze their historical, political, cultural, social, and rhetorical contexts within online platforms. This research gap must be filled in order to gain a deeper understanding of how BDS discourse develops and spreads in the Malaysian public sphere.

Thus, with all discussions above, this study highlighted these research questions (1) how rhetorical situation extensively explains rhetorical appeals in press releases published by BDS Malaysia? (2) How are the rhetorical strategies of ethos, pathos and logos were utilized in press releases published by BDS Malaysia?

Methodology
This study adopts a critical paradigm, which seeks to uncover power structures, ideological influences, and rhetorical strategies within social movements. Critical theory emphasizes the role of language and symbols in constructing meaning, revealing how discourse reinforces or challenges dominant power relations (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019). Building on this framework, the study incorporates Foucauldian discursive genealogy, examining how key terms such as "apartheid," "justice," and "human rights" are historically and ideologically deployed in BDS Malaysia's discourse (Hitchcock, 2020). By tracing the evolution of these terms within anti-colonial and international law discourses, the analysis reveals how the movement strategically aligns its rhetoric with globally resonant values to counter pro-Israeli narratives and reconstruct a moral-political framework centered on Palestinian liberation.

Methodologically, this study employs qualitative rhetorical analysis to dissect the persuasive strategies in BDS Malaysia's press releases. Specifically, it applies Aristotelian rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) to examine how the movement constructs credibility (ethos), invokes emotional responses (pathos), and employs logical arguments (logos) to mobilize support. Key rhetorical frames, such as the portrayal of Palestinians as victims and Israel as an aggressor, are analyzed to understand how BDS challenges Israel's dominant narrative as a democratically and reframes its policies as systemic oppression.

To systematically analyze these rhetorical strategies, the study utilizes thematic analysis, categorizing discursive patterns under the three Aristotelian appeals while allowing for emergent sub-themes. This approach provides both analytical rigor and interpretive flexibility, enabling an exploration of how language, framing, and historical references interact within the sociopolitical context. The analysis is further guided by Bitzer's (1968) concept of the rhetorical situation, which considers how audience, exigency, and speaker intent shape persuasive communication (Brennan & Merkl-Davies, 2014).

In sum, this study moves beyond mere identification of rhetorical techniques; it interrogates how these strategies are embedded within historical power dynamics, ideological contestations, and discursive evolution. By integrating critical discourse analysis, genealogical inquiry, and rhetorical theory, the research offers a holistic understanding of BDS Malaysia's framing mechanisms, revealing not only how the movement persuades its audience but also how it reconfigures the broader discourse on Palestine-Israel within the Malaysian context.

All data in this study were collected manually for analysis from the 'Media Kenyataan' (Press Release) section of the BDS Malaysia website. Initial observations indicate that BDS Malaysia publishes an average of 2–6 press releases per month, making this volume manageable for manual extraction and review without relying on automated tools. While this method may require additional time and effort, it ensures a thorough, hands-on approach to data collection, promoting deeper engagement with the material and enhancing accuracy in the analysis.

This research has analyzed press releases published between the year 2023 and 2024. This two-year period was chosen to allow for an in-depth examination of how BDS Malaysia's messaging evolved before, during, and after the Al-Aqsa conflict in October 2023, an event that drew global attention, sparked public debate, and likely intensified local interest and engagement with BDS-related issues. This time frame provides an opportunity to explore how the organization's narratives respond to significant developments, how key events influence public communication, and how messages shift over time. By tracing these changes, the study aims to uncover how BDS Malaysia adapts its rhetorical strategies in response to critical incidents and shifting social and political contexts. This will offer a deeper understanding of the relationship between time, discourse, and the dynamics of social movement mobilization.

In these two years, BDS Malaysia has published 62 press releases on its website. To facilitate an in-depth discussion rather than a broad overview, the researcher has employed a sample selection process to narrow the focus to 19 press releases. This smaller sample size is suitable for the rhetorical analysis methodology adopted in this study. The small sample size chosen also referenced precedents from similar rhetorical studies that have demonstrated sample adequacy (Nair et al., 2019; Wang, 2016; Brennan & Merkl-Davies, 2014).

Table 1
Time Frame and number of press releases issued by BDS Malaysia

Month/ Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Sum
2023	0	1	1	3	2	8	2	1	1	2	1	2	24
2024	2	0	4	6	6	5	5	2	3	3	2	0	38

In this study, purposive sampling was employed as a deliberate and strategic method for selecting press releases that meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. As a form of non-probability sampling, purposive sampling involves the intentional inclusion of data sources that offer the greatest likelihood of generating rich, relevant and meaningful insights. This approach aligns with the goals of qualitative rhetorical analysis, where depth and contextual relevance are prioritized over breadth or generalizability. The purposive sampling strategy was operationalized through a structured, data selection method adapted from Moher et al. (2009), utilizing a multistage approach consisting of three stages: (a) Identification, (b) Screening, (c) Eligibility, with each stage incorporated predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Identification. The identification phase involved gathering all press releases within the specified analysis time frame. During this phase, 62 press releases published by BDS Malaysia

2023, and 2024, were identified as the initial pool of data. To ensure accuracy, duplicate press releases were removed. This initial step served to create a complete and inclusive dataset for further refinement.

Screening. The second stage is known as Screening Stage, which involved the application of specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to refine and narrow the dataset for focused and reliable analysis. This step was essential to ensure that only the most relevant, consistent, and analyzable content was retained for the rhetorical examination. Given the volume and variety of press releases published on BDS Malaysia's website over the selected two-year period, this screening process helped reduce redundancy and excluded materials that could introduce inconsistencies or fall outside the scope of the study. The criteria were finalized based on methodological relevance and the demands of qualitative rhetorical analysis.

1. **Language**: Only press releases written in English were selected for inclusion in the final dataset. Since rhetorical strategies are often closely tied to linguistic nuances, semantic structures, and cultural idioms, mixing languages could have introduced analytical discrepancies. Restricting the dataset to English texts ensured uniformity in interpretation and allowed for a more focused application of rhetorical frameworks.

2. **Source Authenticity**: To preserve the contextual and organizational specificity of the study, only press releases originally published by BDS Malaysia were included. Press releases reposted or syndicated from external sources, such as the BDS National Committee (BNC) or the global BDS Movement's official platforms, were excluded from the analysis. This distinction was made to ensure that the data accurately reflected the rhetoric, tone, and messaging strategies formulated by the Malaysian branch itself, rather than those of the broader international movement. The study is particularly concerned with the local dynamics of communication, making source authenticity a crucial criterion.

3. **Content Type**: The study focused exclusively on press releases containing textual content. Press releases consisting solely of visuals such as posters, infographics, or images without accompanying explanatory text were excluded. While visual communication can play a significant role in social movement messaging, it falls outside the scope of this research, which is grounded in rhetorical and discourse analysis. Textual data allow for deeper engagement with linguistic features such as argument structure, emotional appeals, and persuasive language, all of which are central to this study's analytical approach.

4. **Word Count Threshold**: To ensure that each selected press release contained sufficient content for meaningful rhetorical analysis, a minimum word count of 300 words was established as an inclusion criterion. Press releases falling below this threshold were excluded on the basis that they may lack the depth and elaboration required for detailed examination.

After rigorously applying these criteria, the initial pool of press releases was significantly refined. The remaining dataset consisted of carefully selected texts that met all the necessary conditions for comprehensive rhetorical evaluation. This refined dataset formed the basis for the next phase of analysis, ensuring both analytical depth and methodological consistency throughout the study.

Eligibility. A total of 21 articles were selected for the third phase, the eligibility phase. In this stage, the researchers scrutinized the title and content of each press release. Two press releases were excluded from this stage because they lacked relevance to the local context in

Malaysia and contained insufficient information for detailed textual analysis. This final stage ensured that only high quality, contextually relevant data were available for analysis. After completing all stages of the systematic screening process, 19 press releases were identified for the study.
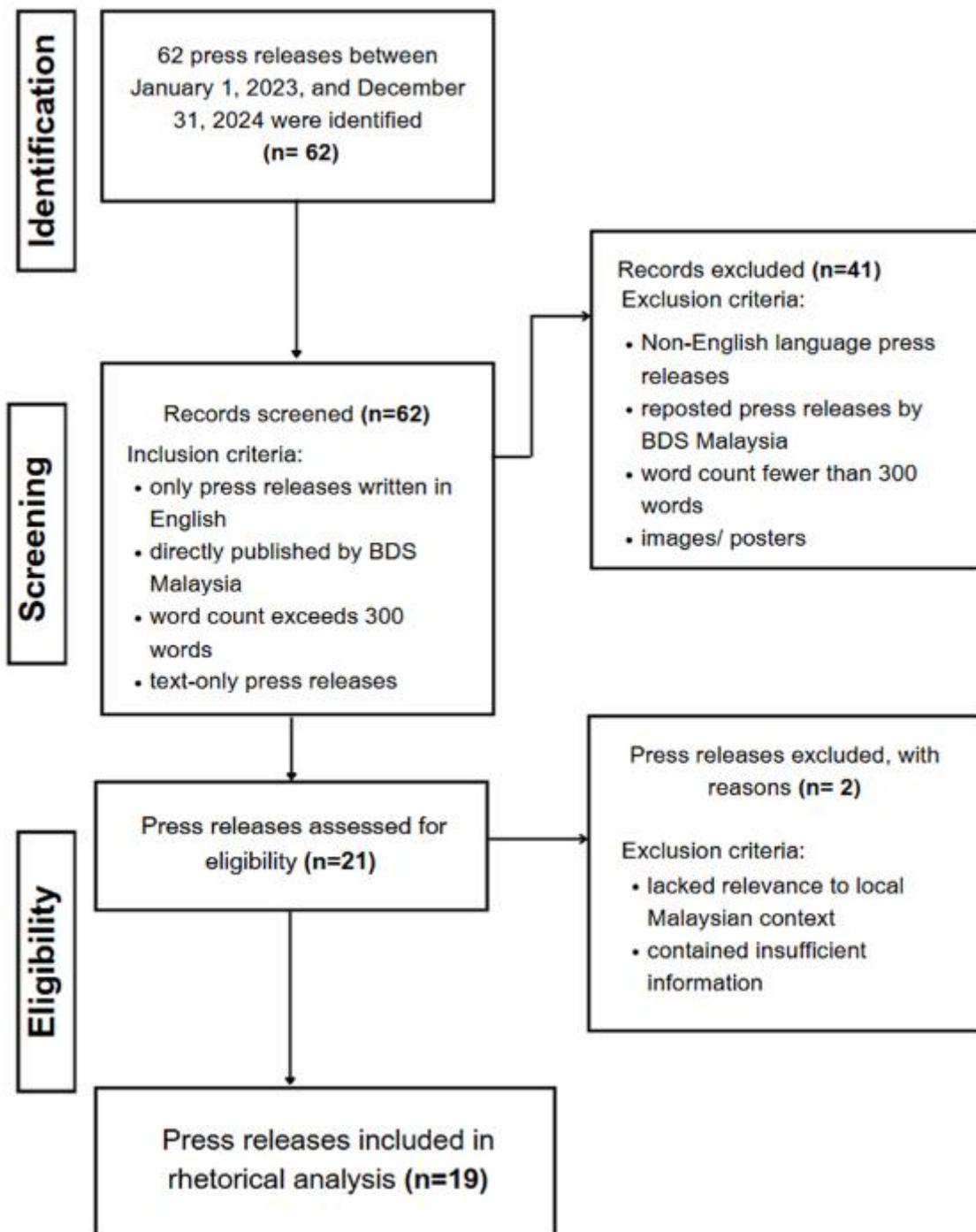

Figure 1 Data Selection Process (adapted from Moher et al., (2009)

The analytical framework of this study is grounded in Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals to analyze the persuasive strategies employed in BDS Malaysia's press releases. This framework was applied to analyze narrative extracts that reflect how BDS Malaysia strategically constructs its messaging to shape public discourse and mobilize support for its cause. The analytical component of the dissertation will involve a critical, close reading of each selected press release, with particular attention to how rhetorical tools are employed to influence audiences. Specifically, the research was guided by the following key questions (a) What are the primary rhetorical strategies Ethos utilized on press releases published by BDS Malaysia? (b) What are the primary rhetorical strategies Pathos utilized on press releases published by BDS Malaysia? (c) What are the primary rhetorical strategies Logos utilized on press releases published by BDS Malaysia? The primary objective of this analysis is to analyze how BDS Malaysia leverages these rhetorical appeals to persuade the public, construct a compelling narrative, and ultimately encourage collective action in support of the boycott movement.

The analytical framework consisting of two levels of analysis, namely (1) an analysis of the rhetorical situation in which the press releases are embedded and (2) a rhetorical analysis of the 19 press releases issued by BDS Malaysia between 2023 and 2024. First, the analysis of rhetorical situation involve process of identifying speaker, audiences, exigencies, and purpose of communication of BDS Malaysia's communication through press releases. Specifically, the analysis includes identifying the speaker, BDS Malaysia as an institutional entity with particular authority, ideological positions, and civil society roles along with its primary and secondary target audiences. The analysis also investigates the specific socio-political exigencies that motivated each press release, as well as the overarching communicative purposes behind their publication. By establishing this contextual foundation, the study ensures that subsequent rhetorical analysis remains grounded in the movement's actual operational circumstances and strategic considerations.

rhetorical excerpts were extracted from each press release and organized into a spreadsheet to facilitate clear and consistent coding. The researcher identified specific linguistic cues, claims, stylistic features, and emotional or logical indicators associated with ethos, pathos, and logos in each excerpt. Ethos was analyzed by examining how BDS Malaysia positioned itself as a credible moral actor, often through references to international laws, reputable organizations, or moral authority. Logos was assessed through the identification of logical structures, such as cause-effect reasoning, citation of statistics, and use of concrete examples. Pathos was evaluated through the presence of emotionally charged language, narratives of victimhood, and vivid descriptions of suffering intended to evoke empathy, anger, or fear.

To enable a more granular and interpretive analysis, each rhetorical appeal was further divided into specific sub-themes. This supervised thematic approach was developed after a preliminary reading of all press releases and sub-themes was developed by referring to existing scholarship (Alkaraan et al., 2022; Fuhat & Wahab, 2024; Herman, 2022; Lu, 2023; Stucki & Sager, 2018). Initial codes were drawn from established frameworks in rhetorical analysis, while emerging themes were refined through multiple rounds of reading and re-coding. For ethos, the sub-themes included expertise, reputation, shared values, and trustworthiness; for pathos, sub-themes comprised anger, sympathy, fear/anxiety/worry, and metaphors and similes; for logos, sub-themes involved cause and effect reasoning, facts and statistics, and the use of examples and cases. In the absence of pre-existing frameworks

specific to BDS discourse in Malaysia, the study adapted sub-theme categories from both classical rhetorical theory and contemporary applications of persuasion in social movement communication. The definition of each sub-themes as shown in table below:

Table 2
Definition of Sub-themes

Appeal	Sub-Theme	Definition
	Expertise	Demonstrating subject-matter knowledge, qualifications, or experience to position BDS Malaysia as a reliable and informed source of information
	Reputation	Establishing credibility by referencing internationally recognized institutions, legal frameworks, or expert authorities that validate BDS Malaysia's claims
Ethos (appeal to credibility)	Shared Values	Aligning the message with the audience's moral, cultural, or political principles to develop a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding
	Trustworthiness	Emphasizing the speaker's integrity, moral character, and sincerity. This includes traits such as honesty, justice, courage, and wisdom that enhance the audience's confidence in the communicator's message
	Anger	Evoking feelings of moral outrage or injustice to provoke action or shift public opinion in favor of the movement's cause
Pathos (appeal to emotion)	Sympathy	Highlighting suffering or vulnerability to elicit compassion and emotional support from the audience
	Fear/ Anxiety/ Worry	Underscoring imminent threats, risks, or potential consequences to inspire concern and urge preventive or corrective action
	Metaphors and Similes	Employing figurative language and vivid imagery to deepen emotional resonance and make abstract ideas more relatable
	Cause and Effect	Presenting logical sequences or explanations that demonstrate how specific actions lead to particular outcomes, thereby supporting the movement's rationale
Logos (appeal to logic)	Facts and Statistics	Using verifiable data, numbers, and empirical evidence to strengthen arguments and convey objectivity
	Examples and Cases	Referencing historical precedents, real-world scenarios, or specific incidents to provide concrete support for abstract claims

Several strategies were employed to ensure the reliability of the coding process. First, a detailed codebook was developed, including clear operational definitions and thematic criteria. This ensured that the researcher maintained a consistent and thorough understanding of the coding framework throughout the analysis. Additionally, while intercoder reliability typically requires multiple independent coders, its importance in qualitative research remains significant. Intercoder reliability refers to the degree of agreement between different coders on how the same data should be interpreted and categorized (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). As suggested, when a study is conducted by only one researcher, it is possible to establish reliability by involving a second coder to code a sample of the data. Once satisfactory reliability is achieved, the primary researcher may then proceed to code the remaining data independently.

This study adopted a partial double-coding strategy with an intercoder reliability check. To implement this, a second coder was recruited to independently code 20% of the dataset (four press releases) using the established codebook. These samples were selected to represent a diverse range of content types. Both coders independently applied the same thematic categories and coding rules. Intercoder reliability was then assessed using Cohen's Kappa, a statistical measure of agreement that accounts for chance. Discrepancies were identified and resolved through iterative discussions and codebook refinement. Although percentage agreement is a common indicator for measuring intercoder reliability, this study employed Cohen's Kappa instead, as it accounts for agreement occurring by chance. Moreover, Cohen's Kappa is well-suited for categorical nominal variables and a fixed number of items or coding units, making it a more appropriate choice for this research. According to literature, a Cohen's Kappa value above 0.61 indicates substantial agreement between two coders (Cheung & Tai, 2021). In this study, Cohen's Kappa values of 0.95 for main themes and 0.86 for sub-themes were obtained, indicating a high level of agreement and satisfactory reliability between the two coders. With this strong reliability established, the primary researcher proceeded to code the remainder of the dataset independently, using the refined and calibrated codebook with confidence in the consistency and validity of the coding process.

In addition to the intercoder reliability test, the researcher also conducted an intracoder reliability check to ensure consistency in the data coding process. Unlike intercoder reliability, which involves agreement between different coders, intracoder reliability refers to the degree to which the same coder applies codes consistently across multiple instances over time (Connor & Joffe, 2020). To assess this, the researcher re-analyzed 20% of the selected press releases after a two-week interval. The comparison revealed a 90% agreement rate, indicating a high level of coding stability over time. Additionally, reflexive notes were maintained throughout the process to document coding decisions and enhance transparency. The researcher also engaged in peer debriefing by seeking feedback from a mentor to validate interpretations and reduce personal bias. This process introduced alternative perspectives, thereby enhancing objectivity and strengthening the credibility and accuracy of the findings (Khalid Ahmed, 2024). In conclusion, this study has employed comprehensive strategies to ensure the reliability, consistency, and accuracy of the data analysis process.

Results and Discussions
The findings reveal that while most of the press releases incorporate all three rhetorical appeals to some extent, one appeal typically emerges as the dominant persuasive strategy. Pathos is the most prominently used appeal across the sampled press releases. Out of the 19 texts analyzed, 13 relied primarily on emotional appeals to urge support, invoke empathy, and arouse anger or moral outrage in response to unfolding political events in Palestine. Ethos was the primary appeal in four press releases, where the emphasis was placed on credibility, moral standing, and alignment with internationally recognized human rights frameworks. Logos was the leading appeal in only two press releases, with these texts emphasizing factual evidence, cause-and-effect logic, and policy-based arguments. To substantiate these categorizations, the researcher selected representative excerpts that clearly demonstrate the presence of each dominant appeal, supported by the frequency and context of rhetorical keywords and phrases, as well as the overarching structure and tone of the discourse.

Further observations revealed that the frequency of press releases from BDS Malaysia was not evenly distributed over time. There was a notable surge in publication activity following the Israeli military raid on Al-Aqsa Mosque on April 4, 2023. Prior to that incident, no press statements were released in 2023, suggesting a shift toward a more reactive communication strategy in response to escalating geopolitical crises. This trend continued into 2024, with the majority of statements issued in direct response to events related to the intensifying military actions in Gaza. The press releases frequently addressed urgent developments such as civilian casualties, foreign policy decisions, corporate affiliations with Israel, and diplomatic statements by international actors. This reactive strategy demonstrates how BDS Malaysia closely monitors global developments and uses its press releases as a tactical tool to intervene in public discourse and shape political narratives in real-time.

The dissemination strategy also reflects the organization's attempt to reach a broader audience. Although the press releases are formally published on the official BDS Malaysia website, they are often reposted on the group's Facebook and Instagram platforms. This cross-platform sharing indicates a deliberate effort to enhance visibility, engage with digital-savvy supporters, and potentially amplify the reach of their messaging through viral circulation. Additionally, the researcher found that there are no consistent preference regarding the length of the press releases, with word counts ranging from approximately 130 to 1,200 words. However, the organization consistently incorporates Aristotle's rhetorical appeals throughout its statements. The tone of these statements tends to be both formal and emotional. In the following sections, the researcher will provide a detailed explanation of how these appeals are discursively constructed, along with the specific subthemes identified under each category.

In the Aristotelian rhetorical framework, ethos is considered the first and most essential persuasive appeal. It refers to the speaker's character or persona as constructed within the discourse (Wang, 2016). As Lu (2023) explains, "a speaker will inspire the audience's confidence if he can create an image of himself as a person of good sense, good will, and good moral character." In other words, ethos relies on the credibility of the speaker (Lu, 2023). In BDS Malaysia's press releases, the organization appeals to ethos by discursively constructing credibility through several sub-themes, including expertise, reputation, shared values, trustworthiness, and goodwill. Table 3 below demonstrates the specific sub-themes identified within each press release.

Table 3

Sub-themes identified in BDS Malaysia's press releases

Press Release (Published Date)	Ethos				Pathos				Logos		
Sub-theme	EXP	REP	SV	TRU	ANG	SYM	FAW	MP	FS	CE	EC
Jun 15, 2023					✓		✓		✓		
Jun 25, 2023		✓			✓	✓			✓		
Jul 20, 2023		✓			✓						
Oct 24, 2023				✓	✓		✓			✓	
Dec 21, 2023		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	
Jan 19, 2024					✓	✓					
Apr 5, 2024		✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	
May 7, 2024				✓	✓	✓			✓		
May 19, 2024					✓				✓		
May 23, 2024				✓	✓						✓
Jun 25, 2024		✓			✓		✓			✓	
Jul 1, 2024		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Jul 8, 2024	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		
Jul 10, 2024		✓				✓					
Aug 7, 2024		✓				✓					
Sep 12, 2024		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Oct 6, 2024		✓				✓					
Oct 30, 2024		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Nov 1, 2024									✓		

Ethos
EXP= Expertise
REP= Reputation
SV= Shared Values
TRU= Trustworthiness

Pathos
ANG= Angry
SYM= Sympathy
FAW= Fear, Anxiety, Worry
MP= Metaphors

Logos
FS= Facts and Statistics
CE= Cause and Effects
EC= Examples and Cases

On the first stage of the study the researcher first analyzes the rhetorical situation. A rhetorical situation is the set of circumstances out of which a text arises (Jeffrey & Zickel, 2018). In this section, the researcher will briefly review some of the most relevant elements of the rhetorical situations for official BDS discourse, including speaker, audiences, exigencies, and purpose of communication. First to be discussed is the speaker, the communicator who

tries to effect a change in audiences. The primary speaker in this context is BDS Malaysia, a reputable NGO in Malaysia. Observational data suggest that the organization actively disseminates its press releases not only via its official website but also across social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Although direct engagement from audiences on these platforms appears limited, the rhetorical impact of BDS Malaysia's press releases is notably enlarged through mainstream media coverage. For instance, leading local news outlets such as The Star, Bernama, and New Straits Times have frequently quoted BDS Malaysia's statements, thus signaling the newsworthiness and perceived authority of the organization. This indirect media amplification enhances the visibility and legitimacy of BDS Malaysia's discourse and extends its influence beyond its immediate follower base. The organization's ability to frame its messaging in a way that is considered quotable and relevant by national media suggests that it has established a degree of rhetorical credibility, or ethos, within the Malaysian sociopolitical landscape.

The rhetorical situation to be discussed next is the audience that BDS Malaysia intends to reach. According to Bitzer, "a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (Hitchcock, 2020). As Brennan and Merkl-Davies (2014) propose, press releases are often directed at multiple audiences simultaneously, and this concept also applicable in the case of BDS Malaysia. However, findings from this study suggest that the organization primarily targets existing supporters, activists, and individuals who already sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. This is evident in the rhetorical style of the press releases, which tend to omit general background information and instead adopt a direct, assertive tone in addressing the issue at hand. Rather than educating a general or uninformed public, the discourse of BDS Malaysia appears tailored to reinforce shared beliefs and mobilize action among a like-minded audience. This finding is consistent with Hitchcock's (2020) findings that BDS-related social media content attracts people who are already part of the broader social justice or pro-Palestinian advocacy community. In this sense, the rhetorical strategy is not only about persuasion but also about affirming group identity and solidarity, making ethos and pathos especially potent appeals within this context.

While BDS Movement tend to focus on sympathetic audiences that can be called to action in support of the cause of Palestinian rights, there are variety of secondary local and international audiences as well. Nevertheless, BDS Malaysia's press releases also engage a diverse range of secondary audiences, both domestic and international. These audiences include the general public, government policymakers such as the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, international allies, the global BDS network, corporate entities including Amazon Web Services and BlackRock, as well as media organizations. The organization's messaging frequently urges policymakers to take specific actions, such as banning companies or reassessing diplomatic relations. At the same time, the press releases reference developments beyond Malaysia, including resolutions from the United States Congress or statements by foreign ambassadors, thereby positioning BDS Malaysia within a broader global discourse. Additionally, by linking boycott appeals to ongoing developments in Gaza, BDS Malaysia implicitly addresses corporate actors and media institutions, placing them under public scrutiny for perceived complicity in Israeli-affiliated operations. By persuading them of the urgency of the issue, BDS Malaysia mobilized activists to participate in high-profile events, such as a boycott, protest, and reconsider political decision. Through

this approach, the organization expands its rhetorical influence by aiming to affect multiple stakeholders who possess the capacity, whether directly or indirectly, to bring about change. The primary exigence motivating BDS Malaysia's rhetorical responses is the ongoing violence and humanitarian crisis in Palestine, particularly Israel's escalated military actions in Gaza, which the group explicitly denounces as genocide. Their discourse also addresses secondary exigencies, including the inaction or complicity of powerful states (e.g., the U.S.) and corporations, contradictory local policies such as partnerships with Israeli-linked entities despite Malaysia's official pro-Palestine stance, and the need to sustain public awareness to mobilize pressure against such actors. While Hitchcock's research on the BDS movement's exigencies highlights its focus on international community failures, this emphasis appears absent in BDS Malaysia's press releases. Instead, the movement predominantly focuses on holding governments accountable for inconsistencies in their support of the Palestinian cause. These exigences directly shape the movement's purposes: to pressure Malaysian officials into adopting concrete political and economic measures supporting Palestinian rights; to inform and galvanize public sentiment by foregrounding moral injustices and violations of international law; to mobilize collective action through boycotts, protests, and advocacy; and to rhetorically frame the conflict in moral-legal terms, thereby positioning BDS Malaysia as a credible ethical actor while delegitimizing opposing entities.

In sum, by anchoring its strategies in the rhetorical situation, the movement tailors its appeals to resonate with these contextual demands. The section will discuss in depth on application of ethos, pathos, and logos in BDS discourse.

Ethos is the most critical rhetorical appeal as persuasion often begins with the audience's perception of the speaker's "good sense, good will, and good moral character" (Lu, 2023) The findings from RQ1 show that BDS Malaysia strategically builds this triad of virtues by positioning itself as a principled, informed, and morally anchored organization. The organization conveys good sense through appeals to expertise, which involves highlighting its qualifications and experience in advocating for Palestinian rights and engaging with international human rights discourse. It reinforces its reputation by referencing credible sources such as international legal frameworks, UN resolutions, and other globally recognized authorities. Additionally, good moral character is conveyed through consistent emphasis on shared values, such as justice and solidarity, while goodwill is communicated by portraying itself as trustworthy and aligned with the interests and moral concerns of its audience. Together, these elements of ethos enhance BDS Malaysia's credibility.

First, the findings from this study highlight the interplay between Preliminary Ethos and Discourse Ethos. The preliminary ethos and discourse ethos reflect the use of expertise and reputation by the organization. Preliminary ethos is the audiences' initial perception of the speaker's credibility, while discourse ethos is the credibility constructed through the speaker's language and actions during communication (Herman, 2022; Mshvenieradze; 2013). Based on analysis, these two dimensions of ethos intersect and reinforce one another through the strategic use of expertise and reputation. Ethos is related to communicator's images (Herman, 2022). In the case of BDS Malaysia, the preliminary ethos is reinforced by the organization's alignment with Malaysia's long-standing foreign policy of support for Palestine and its affiliation with the global human rights movement. Given Malaysia's strong political and religious support for Palestine, BDS Malaysia has gained local legitimacy by

positioning itself in line with national values and appointing respected academics as its representatives, therefore demonstrated the expertise of the organization in Malaysia's advocacy efforts. On the other side, discourse ethos further strengthens the organization's persuasive appeal. While BDS Malaysia lacks institutional authority in global governance, it makes up for it by integrating its arguments into a universally recognized ethical framework, thereby bridging the credibility gap. Among the various components of ethos, this study finds that reputation is the most prominently employed strategy by BDS Malaysia. For instance, the organization frequently references human rights law, Geneva Conventions, and UN Charter obligations to support its legitimacy. BDS Malaysia builds trust by appealing to shared values with its audience, emphasizing justice, human dignity, and solidarity. As Kuchel and Rowland (2023) argue, ethical persuasion is inherently audience-centered; credibility arises not from institutional power but from embodying traits and principles that the audience admires. In summary, BDS Malaysia reinforces this initial credibility by leveraging inherited legitimacy and demonstrating deep familiarity with international legal frameworks and consistently upholding moral values such as justice, human rights, and solidarity, thereby enhancing overall persuasive impact.

Given ethos concerns both ethics and credibility, the researcher also analyzed the way that the organization introduced themselves. BDS Malaysia strategically constructs its organizational ethos through a combination of explicit and implicit self-representations across its press releases. In several instances, the group explicitly defines itself, such as in the statement: "BDS Malaysia is a movement initiated by concerned citizens to uphold international law and universal principles of human rights." This directly positions the organization as a law-abiding, ethically grounded civil society actor. Similarly, the description "As a nonviolent, grassroots movement, BDS Malaysia urges…" clearly establishes the movement's commitment to peaceful activism and democratic legitimacy. These explicit declarations help to build trust and credibility, especially in the perceptions of policymakers and institutional audiences. Under some circumstances, BDS Malaysia also adopts implicit characterizations, whereby reinforcing its identity through alignment and action. For example, the phrase "In line with the global BDS movement and international law…" indirectly places the organization within a globally recognized framework of legitimacy and legalism. Likewise, calls such as "We call upon all Malaysians to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people…" frame BDS Malaysia as a moral leader and mobilizer of collective conscience, without overtly labeling itself as such. Even in advocacy demands like "We urge the Malaysian Government… to act in compliance with international obligations," the organization implicitly assumes the role of watchdog and moral compass. These rhetorical choices reveal tailored strategies to improve the organization's trustworthiness.

In addition to the organization's self-presentation, the researcher also analyzes antagonists in BDS Malaysia press releases. By constructing the "enemy" or "oppressor," it opposes, the movements tend to clarify their own moral position, unify supporters, and simplify complex issues into actionable frames (Jezierska & Polanska, 2018). Besides, social movements often define themselves through their opposition, highlighting conflicting values or goals. This is a rhetorical practice that pioneer new rhetoric scholars, Hahn & Gonchar (1971) and Kennet Burke (1969) describe as identification through division. Across the organization's press releases, this opposition is shaped by repeated condemnation of specific actors, institutions and behaviors that are perceived as contributing to or embodying injustice, occupation and

complicity. Antagonists mentioned in BDS Malaysia's press release are categorized into several groups, including state actors, corporate identities, western governments, local authorities and international organization. Undoubtedly, BDS Malaysia frequently criticizes state actors, especially Israeli government and its military forces for state violence against Palestine, with use of terms such as "apartheid regime", and "racist military occupation". These words can be seen in high frequency in their press releases. Besides, corporate entities, particularly Amazon Web services and BlackRock are portrayed as complicit profiteers. These companies are named and shamed for enabling Israeli weapons development and military logistics, therefore placing these corporations on the wrong side of justice and ethics. Similar portrayal also applicable to condemnation to US government, local authorities, and international organization such as the UN for failing to act decisively or uphold human rights obligation. In most cases, the antagonists are framed using morally charged and emotionally resonant language. These findings also support Edrington's (2021) claim that in social movements, ethos manifests not only through moral standing but also through oppositional identity construction. By defining itself in opposition to these clearly articulated oppositions, BDS in Malaysia constructs ethos by showing identity that is morally upright, globally connected, and socially responsible. This opposition also simplifies the movement's message, transforming complex geopolitical issues into narratives of right and wrong, justice, and complicity. This "us vs. "them" rhetoric strengthens the in-group sense of moral clarity and draws sharper contrast with perceived injustice. In summary, through constructing the "Other" in its press releases, the organization indirectly strengthens its appeal to ethos.

These findings reflect Aristotle's view that ethos is not only about authority, but also about the audience's perception of the speaker's character rooted in virtue, practical wisdom, and goodwill (Mori, 2016). Overall, this study aligns with Hitchcock's analysis, which highlights how BDS Malaysia maintains its ethos by projecting credibility and a principled commitment to nonviolence. The organization's moral appeal is consistently expressed through the formal, deliberate language of its press releases, reinforcing its image as a legitimate, morally grounded actor. However, the occasional use of highly charged rhetoric, such as "enablers of genocide" or "Zionist war chest," may diminish the objectivity of the message, especially in the context of Malaysia's pluralistic and multiracial nature. Balancing moral conviction with rhetorical restraint remains key to sustaining ethos across varied audiences.

Through analyzing BDS Malaysia press releases, the researcher find that pathos is strategically deployed through metaphors and emotions such as anger, fear, sympathy, moral outrage of outages, to put readers in the shoes of Palestinian victims and stimulate both solidarity and action in support of the Palestinian cause. By utilizing these powerful emotional triggers, BDS Malaysia has effectively amplified its advocacy efforts, highlighting the suffering of victims while compelling audiences to respond morally and practically.

A consistent pattern that can be found in Malaysian BDS is the frequent emphasis on the vulnerability of women and children in Gaza, particularly through the repetition of casualty statistics involving minors. This repeated emphasis increases the memorability and emotional salience of the message (Mrkva & Van Bowen; 2022; Palumbo et al., 2021). Indeed, multiple studies have proved that repeated emotional events are remembered better than neutral or single events (Krenz et al., 2025; Palumbo et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2023). Consequently, the organization's deliberate use of terms such as "genocide," "massacre," "brutality," and

"sickening depravity" aims to evoke strong emotional responses and to construct a stark moral dichotomy that frames Israel as the perpetrator and Palestinians as defenseless victims. Among these terms, "genocide" stands out as the most frequently used by BDS Malaysia to condemn the actions of the Israeli military, appearing in nearly every press release as a descriptor of Israeli brutality. This consistent deployment of emotionally charged language not only provokes public outrage but also develops a sense of urgency and sympathy, framing the conflict as an immediate humanitarian crisis that demands immediate action from all parties.

Furthermore, the findings show that BDS prefers using apocalyptic narratives in social movement discourse. Apocalyptic narratives refer to the use of vivid, alarming depictions of the future that evoke fear, indignation, or compassion (Feldman, 2020). Throughout the one-year data, BDS Malaysia frequently describes the Gaza conflict as an existential crisis, using catastrophic language that emphasizes the overall destruction of lives, property and communities. For instances, the references to the "systematic erasure" of Palestinian identity (e.g. "entire families erased from civil records," and "mass graves inside hospitals") create a narrative of cultural annihilation consistent with an apocalyptic frame. Besides, the document lists staggering casualty figures (e.g., 52,885 killed, 17,210 children dead, 86% of Gaza destroyed), creating a vision of near-total devastation reminiscent of biblical or dystopian collapse. The strategies described align closely with Aristotle's recommendations for invoking fear: pointing to a threat, stressing its seriousness and urgency, highlighting unpreparedness, and citing examples of strong individuals who suffered greatly (Aristotle, 1963). The portrayal of the U.S. as the "Number One Villain of the world" and corporations like BlackRock as genocide-enablers" further amplifies the apocalyptic tone, casting these entities as malevolent forces perpetuating global injustice. BDS Malaysia uses emotionally heightened narratives to paint a dire picture of Palestinian suffering, compelling audiences to respond not just intellectually, but emotionally and morally.

Apocalyptic narratives often contain metaphors. As Brennan & Merkl-Davies (2014) argued, metaphors are more than rhetorical flourishes; they are powerful cognitive tools that influence the audience's understanding of and response to social issues. In short, people's thinking and behavior are influenced by metaphors used to describe problems. Metaphors such as "the mask is off" and "the world is watching" reinforce the idea of a final reckoning, where hidden truths are revealed and moral failures are exposed. The call for boycotts, sanctions, and expulsion from the UN is framed not just as political action but as a necessary stand against an impending catastrophe. By invoking historical parallels such as apartheid South Africa, the Holocaust, and colonial crimes, the press releases situate the conflict within a broader narrative of oppression and liberation, demanding urgent intervention. Also, BDS Malaysia's references to "hands soaked in blood" or the media being "covered in Palestinian blood" metaphorically personify complicity and guilt, transforming abstract political arguments into visceral moral indictments. Through strategically employment of apocalyptic narratives and metaphors, the organization directs the reader's way of thinking to approve strong law enforcement and strict governmental policies to end the geopolitical conflict.

Nonetheless, the finding of pathos as prominent appeal in BDS discourse contradicts with the study of Hitchcock (2016), who proposed that pathos is the least utilized appeal in the U.S. BDS Movement's communication. This discrepancy may be explained by cultural differences

in communication styles, particularly Hall's (1989) high- and low-context theory. In high-context cultures, much of the meaning is conveyed implicitly through the surrounding environment or internalized within the individual, with only a small portion communicated explicitly through words. Communication in these high-context cultures is often implicit, indirect, and sentimental. On the other hand, in a low-context culture, most of the information is conveyed directly through explicit language or coding. The members of these cultural groups expect direct and explicit messages, in both visual and verbal forms. Western countries such as the U.S. typically exhibit low-context communication preferences, which aligns with the emphasis on logos observed in Hitchcock's study. Organizations or individuals tend to adapt communication strategies to fit local cultural norms (Xu & Duan, 2023; Zakaroa & Muton, 2022). For BDS Malaysia, operating in a high-context cultural setting, their communication strategy is tailored to rely more heavily on pathos. One of the main functions of pathos is to foster identification with the suffering of others, enabling audiences to develop "deep empathy through shared emotional experience." This strategy aligns with the cultural preference for moral and affective persuasion over fact-driven appeals. Whereas Western audiences may respond more to data and explicit arguments, Eastern audiences are often more receptive to emotional cues, symbolic language, and implicit moral appeals. Thus, BDS Malaysia's reliance on pathos reflects an adaptation to high-context communication norms, diverging from the logos-centric approach observed in Western contexts.

Beyond Hall's high-low context framework, the efficacy of pathos in BDS Malaysia's discourse is further amplified by the nation's profoundly collectivist cultural orientation. Collectivist culture-oriented societies tend to attach greater importance to obeying group norms, group achievement, and strong group connections and relationships. In these culture group, sacrificing oneself for the benefit of the community or society is encouraged (Xu & Duan, 2023). In socially and religiously conscious societies like Malaysia, where Islamic, humanitarian, and moral values are central to public discourse, emotional appeals do not merely persuade; they activate culturally embedded systems of meaning. By strategically invoking values such as "'adl" (justice), "raḥma" (compassion), and "karāmah" (human dignity), concepts resonant within Islamic and humanitarian frameworks, BDS Malaysia transcends mere rhetoric. This approach cultivates collective identification by framing Palestinian suffering as a violation of universal moral principles upheld by the community. Consequently, support for the cause becomes not just an emotional response, but a fulfillment of in-group ethical obligation, a mechanism that significantly fortifies the movement's legitimacy and mobilizing power within its sociocultural context.

In this study, Pathos is not used in isolation. Emotional appeals are often embedded within or accompanied by logical arguments (Salgoda, 2018). For example, BDS Malaysia often cited casualty counts alongside emotionally charged descriptions. This dual use of logos and pathos reinforces the emotional credibility of the claims while maintaining a veneer of objectivity and legality. In summary, BDS Malaysia's strategic dominance of pathos, manifested through metaphors, apocalyptic narratives, and visceral depictions of Palestinian suffering had demonstrates how emotional appeals are culturally and rhetorically optimized for high-context, collectivist societies. The movement's emphasis on women's and children's vulnerability, morally charged terminology (e.g., "genocide"), and catastrophic imagery not only heightens memorability and urgency but also activates deeply held Islamic-humanitarian values. In doing so, BDS Malaysia's discourse exemplifies how the use of metaphors,

sympathy, anger, and fear can bridge individual sentiment with broader cultural and moral frameworks, effectively mobilizing support within its sociocultural context.

Logos is the least emphasized rhetorical appeals in BDS Malaysia's press releases. However, when utilized, it provides essential argumentative weight through cause-and-effect frameworks, facts and statistics, and examples and case studies. The findings indicate that BDS Malaysia often uses rhetorical devices characteristic such as questioning, reasoning, and argumentative progression to enhance appeals to logos. According to Brennan and Merkl-Davies (2014), effective argumentation typically includes three interrelated elements: (1) a claim or proposition, (2) assumptions or beliefs underpinning that claim, and (3) supporting evidence. In the BDS Malaysia context, claims such as accusations of "war crimes" are frequently grounded in casualty reports and case studies. This alignment of claims with recognized evidence contributes to persuasive appeal to logic. In contrast to pathos's reliance on emotion, logos suggests the audience engage analytically, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the credibility of the supporting information.

Firstly, the most prominent strategy employed by BDS Malaysia to strengthen logical appeal is the use of facts and statistics, particularly casualty figures. For instance, citing data such as "17,000 children killed" or referencing specific United Nations resolutions serves to provide a quantifiable and objective basis for the claim that Israel has committed violations of international law. The use of numerical evidence functions not only as a factual anchor but also enhances the perceived legitimacy and rationality of the argument. Research by Wieluch and Praxmarer-Carus (2024) found that numerical data can be particularly persuasive when audiences are psychologically distant from an issue or process information in a more abstract, analytical mode. Given Malaysia's geographical and political distance from direct conflict zones, the experience of war may not be as immediate or visceral to its public. In this context, the strategic use of large-scale casualty statistics able to bridge that distance and demonstrate a more cognitively engaged response to the Palestinian crisis.

While numerical data can trigger emotional reactions and thus overlap with pathos, this study coded such data under logos when they appeared in standalone or list formats, particularly when the figures were presented as statistical facts rather than as part of an emotionally framed narrative. However, it was observed that BDS Malaysia seldom presents numerical information in purely statistical formats. This might reflect a recognition of the limited persuasive power of numbers in isolation. Numerical information alone is often the least effective in changing attitudes or behavioral intentions (Chirico et al., 2020_. Instead, combining statistics with concrete examples or emotionally resonant narratives has been shown to increase both comprehension and persuasiveness (Chirico et al., 2020). BDS Malaysia's rhetorical approach appears to acknowledge this by embedding facts within broader ethical or humanitarian appeals, thereby maximizing the impact of their logos strategy through strategic integration rather than isolated data presentation.

In addition, Aristotle defined logos as the means by which a speaker persuades through reasoned discourse, often articulated through enthymemes, the rhetorical syllogisms that draw probable conclusions from widely accepted premises (Lu, 2023). This rhetorical strategy underlies many of BDS Malaysia's press releases, which often employ an implicit logical structure that allows the audience to infer conclusions based on shared moral or legal

assumptions. For example, the statement "Participation in arms transfer to Israel therefore amounts to complicity in genocide" reflects an enthymematic form of reasoning. It presupposes a syllogistic structure: if genocide is universally condemned as a crime, and the provision of arms enables such acts, then supporting that arms transfer constitutes moral and legal complicity. Although these premises are not explicitly unpacked, the logic is embedded in the discourse, requiring the audience to complete the argument themselves. This method of reasoning is particularly powerful in persuasive communication because it draws upon the audience's pre-existing values and beliefs, allowing them to feel a sense of intellectual and ethical alignment with the speaker. Enthymemes not only encourage cognitive engagement but also foster a sense of identification between speaker and audience (Chakrabarty et al., 2021; Fredal, 2020; Lessl, 2021). In this way, BDS Malaysia utilizes logos not only as a tool of rational persuasion but also as a subtle mechanism for reinforcing collective identity and shared moral frameworks.

Another mode of logical appeal used by BDS Malaysia is cause-and-effect reasoning. Cause-and-effect reasoning enhances logos by helping audiences understand why certain events are occurring and how different factors are interconnected. In BDS Malaysia's discourse, causal structures are often employed to link Israeli actions (cause) with humanitarian crises and violations of international law (effect). For example, press releases frequently assert that Israeli military aggression (cause) results in the deaths of innocent civilians, destruction of homes, and displacement of entire communities (effect). This causal chain both explains the conflict and emphasizes its human cost. The cause-and-effect structure also serves to allocate responsibility and assign blame, which is critical in advocacy communication. By consistently attributing civilian casualties, economic hardship, and humanitarian crises to Israeli policies and military actions, BDS Malaysia constructs a clear narrative of victimization and oppression. This structure is rhetorically effective because it simplifies complex geopolitical events into accessible, linear explanations that resonate with audiences, particularly in high-context, collectivist cultures like Malaysia's (Hall, 1976). In such cultures, relational and contextual understanding is highly valued, and cause-and-effect narratives help audiences connect individual suffering to broader systemic injustices. Furthermore, cause-and-effect reasoning supports calls to action by logically connecting the current situation with the need for collective response. For example, by showing that economic support for Israeli companies contributes to the ongoing oppression of Palestinians, BDS Malaysia justifies its boycott campaigns and encourages its audience to act.

The role of logos in fostering audience trust is highlighted by Yang et al. (2018), who found that in consumer contexts, logos had the largest effect on trust, followed by ethos and pathos. Although BDS Malaysia's context is advocacy rather than commercial marketing, a similar dynamic may be observed; appeals to logic reinforce the organization's moral and factual positioning, especially in an environment where claims of human rights abuses are highly contested. For example, references to statistical data on casualties, historical accounts, cases, examples and legal principles demonstrate an effort to substantiate accusations and build rational arguments that audiences can evaluate. Interestingly, findings from Yang et al. (2018) and Amos et al. (2021), indicate that among ethos, pathos, and logos, it is logos that most strongly correlates with trust in a speaker or organization. While BDS Malaysia relies heavily on emotional appeal, the inclusion of logical reasoning, even if less frequent, plays a vital role in reinforcing its overall credibility and anchoring its moral claims in verifiable evidence.

As mentioned in the last section on Pathos, logos do not operate in a vacuum. Logical appeals are often intertwined with emotional undertones, especially when discussing humanitarian crises. In this way, BDS Malaysia's use of statistics not only appeals to reason but also amplifies emotional impact, reinforcing rather than diminishing pathos. In summary, while logos is less prevalent than pathos in BDS Malaysia's rhetorical strategy, it functions as a critical underpinning for the movement's claims. Through a combination of factual and statistical citations, cause and effect reasoning, and using examples and cases, BDS Malaysia strengthens its ethos and pathos appeals, constructing a layered and persuasive argument structure that invites both rational agreement and moral engagement from its audiences.

As for conclusion, BDS Malaysia demonstrates a high degree of rhetorical agility by tailoring its appeals to specific audiences. Whether appealing to the legal rationality of policymakers, the emotional solidarity of grassroots supporters, or the reputational concerns of corporations, the organization adapts its tone, evidence, and messaging to maximize persuasive impact. This strategic adaptability reflects a sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical situation and underscores the organization's ability to engage in multi-level advocacy. By aligning rhetorical choices with audience expectations, BDS Malaysia not only sustains relevance across diverse contexts but also amplifies its influence within Malaysia and beyond.

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