

INTERFACES BETWEEN MISSION, PURPOSE AND ORIENTATION TO SERVE IN SERVICE COMPANIES

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Abstract

One of the main tools for communicating organizational identity is the mission statement. Recently, the use of organizational purpose as a motivator of people's behavior has emerged in the business environment. This is of greater importance in service companies. The orientation to serve has oriented the organizational strategy, making a service-oriented company, willing to serve the customer, in which people adopt servant behavior. This research aimed to identify interfaces between the definitions of mission, purpose and servant behavior in service companies. For this study, they were considered reputed service companies in Brazil.

Keywords: Mission, Organizational Purpose, Servant Behavior.

Introduction

Growth of change and search for competitiveness has led companies to change the way they produce, sell, serve and provide goods and services. In this way the elaboration of the strategic planning became of great value for an organization that seeks to remain competitive (PORTER, 1989). When defined, the strategy should be disseminated to the company's stakeholders, in order to integrate them into the organizational objective. According to Coutinho et al., (2005, p.34), "communicating strategy is to initiate a process of intended changes", allowing the organization alignment, and an effective way to disseminate the strategy is through the organizational mission.

Mission is one of the organizational identity elements that describes the reason for existence of a company, as well as signaling the organization's initial intentions

regarding strategic challenges (KING et al., 2012). Since mission is a tool that has been used to corporate communication (STALLWORTH, 2008), organizations are increasingly aware of the need to declare their mission as the starting point of the strategic definition (BART, 2006), however, only the definition and dissemination of the mission is not enough for organizational engagement. In this sense an element called "organizational purpose" emerges in the business environment.

Organizational purpose portrays what really involves the organization, its motivation to exist, and conveys the organizational essence (MINTZBERG et al., 2000, READY and TRUELOVE, 2011; KHALIFA, 2012). A company that has a well-defined purpose can engage its employees, allowing them to work as a team, focused on common goals, giving a competitive advantage to the organization. Purpose is also capable of manifesting a different behavior in the company, because employees come to better understand the meaning of work. In this approach there are three pillars related to the study of purpose: authenticity of mission, significant value and working with inspiration, suggesting that the company prioritize among these pillars which should serve better (KHALIFA, 2012; DRUCKER, 2006; ELLSWORTH, 2002).

On the other hand, the concept of a servant company, defined as a company that goes beyond its responsibilities, being ready to go beyond its standardized processes. In this way, people who make up a servant company are expected to adopt servant behavior. The characteristics of a servant behavior correspond to responsibility, simplicity, resignation, initiative, desire to help, practices of good and utility (NÓBREGA, 2009).

The study of mission, purpose and servant behavior can be applied to any type of organization, however, it stands out in this context service companies, where Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2005) affirm that the service is intangible and that the consumer buys the result that it offers.

Thus, the present research had as objective to identify interfaces between the definitions of mission, purpose and servant behavior in service companies. For this study, service companies in Brazil, ranked among the largest and best, subdivided into five segments: wholesale, retail, service, transportation and energy were selected.

Fundamentals

Organizational mission states the purpose for existence of a company, expliciting what the organization does and how it distinguishes itself from others (MINTZBERG et al., 2000). According to Drucker (2006), organizational mission makes clear the objectives of the company and defines the reason for the existence of an organization. For Irigaray et al (2016), mission is considered a communication tool between the company and its stakeholders, serving as a starting point to guide the elaboration of strategic planning and is increasingly used for its formulation (KHALIFA, 2012; BART, 2006), since the mission, according to Oliveira (2008), must be implemented with the strategic intention of moving the organization towards success, that is, the correct definition of the organizational mission provides competitive advantage in the perspective of the strategy (KING et al., 2012)

Studies about the use of organizational mission gained strength around the 1980s (MUSSOI et al., 2011; MACHADO, 2003). Stallworth (2008) states that, for more than 30 years, mission has been used as a means of corporate communication. During decades of studies dedicated to organizational mission, the concept underwent transformations and was expanded to encompass not only the role of the organization in society, but to involve other aspects related to organizational goal and image. From this perspective, mission comes to be seen as an all-inclusive, which has three pillars: a commitment that reflects mission's authenticity; meaningful and inspirational value to

improve the organization's ability, and a noble cause to give meaning to all of the company in such a way that they are willing to invest their energies in the pursuit of the goals. This, defining a purpose to serve in which this purpose must be genuine and achievable (KHALIFA, 2012).

More recently, the use of organizational purpose has emerged in business community, which directs and motivates people's performance. Purpose does not substitute mission, vision, and values, but focuses on the genuine essence of company and community (MINTZBERG et al., 2000, READY and TRUELOVE, 2011).

To Khalifa (2012), the purpose is to join the mission, vision and values as a complement to formalization of organizational identity, since purpose involves aspects related to motivation, effect, to make happen. Purpose emerges as a complement in organizational identity and its formalization is a way to disseminate organizational mission, so that it comes to be experienced, especially in service companies. Although purpose is to be used in business environment, many academic studies on the subject are not evident. For Ready and Truelove (2011) the company must have an authentic and ambitious purpose, which should be a factor of energizing business, creating a sense of direction for its members, seeking to be affective and effective, meaningful (CHAMPY and NOHRIA, 2000; KHALIFA, 2012).

Definition of organizational purpose must be based on commitment, as a cause where employees can admire and be willing to expend their energies for this purpose (KHALIFA, 2012). The author also lists three pillars related to the study of purpose: reflection on the authenticity of the mission; significant value and the ability of the organization to work with inspiration; and the third affirms that a worthy purpose gives meaning to the work of the employees, helping them to work more focused on the objectives proposed (DRUCKER, 2006; ELLSWORTH, 2002; GEORGE, 2003; KHALIFA, 2012).

Studies on servant company have emerged from the maturation of research related to the sense of serving and servant behavior (SANTOS, 2013). For Nóbrega (2009) to serve is related to providing benefits to those who are served, to add value, to go beyond demand. With this, a servant company can be understood as an organization that performs beyond its processes, a company that brings a new management model, which seeks to build great results. "The orientation to serve has guided the strategy of several organizations" (RAMALHO et al., 2018), and a servant company shows itself as such from the first contact with clients.

A servant company originates servant products, performed through servant processes, based on a service culture, promoted by a service leader, who delivers benefits to customers and goes beyond meeting demands presented by them (NÓBREGA, 2009). It focuses on results, respect, sense of service, responsiveness, and commitment to others, having a focus on utility and efficiency (NÓBREGA, 2009), being a company concerned with offering the best possible experience to its users. A servant company is driven by servant behavior and the behavior of people is expected to be commensurate with the sense of serving. Servant behavior focuses on responsibility, utility, good practices, resignation, initiative, simplicity, and the desire to help (NÓBREGA, 2009, 2012).

Servant behavior can be understood as a compromise (MEDEIROS, 2010) and should guide the organizational behavior, causing people involvement on having identification with company culture, since servant behavior must be spontaneous, which contributes to development of all involved (ZEITHAML and BITNER, 2003).

Method

Research was conducted in a documentary manner, based on mission statements of companies ranked among the 500 largest and best Brazilian service companies (EXAME, 2016), a renowned Brazilian business publication. From the list of companies, mission statements were been accessed through sites, documents and other available materials. Among the 500 largest and best companies, 234 were selected because they belong to the wholesale, retail, service, transportation and energy segments.

Variables were defined based on elaboration of a construct, which depicts the consolidation of mission concepts, purpose and servant behavior. For this study, variables were called attributes. These attributes were selected from the studied authors, taking into account what they define as relevant for each dimension. Mission dimension is composed by 11 items selected and considered by Pearce et al., (1982), Campbell (1992), Mullane (2002), Sufi and Lyons (2003), David and David (2003), Bart (2006), Cochran et al., (2008). The 11 items refer to: shareholder, customer relationship, relationship with employees, relationship with suppliers, relationship with society, services/products, socio-environmental responsibility, technology, geographical location and profitability. In the same way the items corresponding to purpose were identified and related. Based on previous studies, six attributes were identified, corresponding to society, value/ philosophy, sustainability, bottom line, employee happiness and organizational strategy. Following the same perspective, seven attributes were identified regarding servant behavior. These attributes were identified from the studies of Nóbrega (2009), Medeiros (2010) and Carvalho (2011).

As an evaluation tool, the identified variables were selected according to the construct. A scale was created to evaluate the degree of attendance of each variable to the mission statement. This scale contemplated the following possibilities of evaluation, as shown in Figure 1.

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Concept</i>
1	Without direct or indirect reference to the subject
2	With indirect reference to the subject
3	No citation, but with direct reference to the subject
4	Indirect citation and no reference to the subject
5	Indirect citation and indirect reference to the subject
6	With indirect citation and direct reference to the subject
7	With direct citation and direct reference to the subject

Figure 1 - Research instrument – Source: Research (2016)

Descriptive analysis were carried out on the degree of mission adherence to theoretical elements, presence of purpose variables and presence of elements of servant behavior in mission statements. Finally, cluster analysis was performed aiming to group similar behaviors on the three constructs.

Results and discussion

Initially an individual study was carried out in each mission statement. Bart (2006) states that there is no rule for an effective mission, but warns that it is understandable and straightforward. The segment that has the most extensive mission statements on

average is energy segment, followed by the wholesale sector. The segment that has on average the smallest mission is transportation segment, however it is worth mentioning that this segment is the one with the fewest companies. The average number of words used in the mission statements analyzed is considered to be high, and may therefore lead to a misunderstanding of transmitted information. When conducting individual analysis of each mission statement, it was identified that three companies have the smallest mission, containing only one sentence and that their declaration varies from four to six words. Companies that in their mission statements have up to 4 words do not refer to the segment of the company.

Analysis of the presence of elements that compose the mission was then performed, in which it was sought to identify which elements of mission statement are most used. Table 1 shows the average of the elements used in mission statements. Data were organized in descending order (percentage).

Table 1 - Frequency of mission elements. Source: Research (2016)

Elements	Average	Percentual
Services/Product	5.29	16.98
Customer relationship	4.2	13.48
Technology	3.67	11.78
Socioambiental Responsibility	3.19	10.24
Strategic Positioning	2.5	8.02
Society relationship	2.48	7.96
Philosophy / Organizational Image	2.19	7.03
Relationship with Employees	2.07	6.64
Profitability	2.01	6.45
Geographic location	1.79	5.74
Investors	1.77	5.68
General	2.83	100

As it can be seen, the overall average for use of mission elements in mission statements was 2.83, and the most cited element was "service / product", corresponding to 16.98% of the total, followed by the element "customer relationship "(13.48%). The least mentioned element corresponds to "shareholder" element (5.68%).

In relation to use of purpose directly, only one company (Redecard) has it formalized. The purpose of the company is defined as "We see in transformation a clever way of evolving and supporting the evolution of the other." In this way the average obtained was 2.83, because, according to the attributes defined by Khalifa (2012), purpose makes indirect mention to the subject, however mission statement of this company has a strong relation with the purpose, containing elements of the own purpose. Considering that only Redecard company has a formal purpose, an analysis was made in mission statement of companies to seek the presence of elements of purpose. Table 2 shows averages obtained from the analysis of purpose elements present in mission statements.

As it can be seen, the element of purpose most quoted in mission statements was "sustainability" (3.19), followed by "society" (2.53). The least used element was "bottom line" (1.13), being mentioned only in the retail segment. The segment that obtained the highest average was the energy segment (3.11) and the lowest average was transport segment (1.43).

Table 2 - Frequency of purpose elements. Source: Research (2016)

Elements	Average	Percentual
Society	2.53	18.70
Value/ Philosophy	2.31	17.07
Sustainability	3.19	23.58
<i>Bottom Line</i>	1.13	8.35
Employees Happiness	2.13	15.74
Organizational Strategy	2.24	16.56
General	2.26	100

Regarding servant behavior analysis, the presence of these elements, which are "responsibility", "utility", "welfare practices", "resignation", "initiative", "simplicity" and "desire to help", Table 3 shows the average obtained in each element, by segment.

Table 3 - Servant Behavior elements presence. Source: Research (2016)

Elements	Average	Percentual
Responsibility	4.24	15.33
Simplicity	2.51	9.08
Resignation	2.21	7.99
Initiative	4.13	14.94
Desire to help	4.9	17.72
Welfare practices	4.79	17.32
Utility	4.87	17.61
General	3.95	100

As observed, the element of servant behavior most quoted in mission statements was "desire to help" (4.9), followed by the element "utility" (4.87). The element that obtained the lowest average was "resignation" (2.21). The segment that obtained the highest overall average was retail segment (4.54) and the one that obtained the lowest overall average was the transport segment (3.52), however it is important to point out that there was no great dispersion in the averages obtained.

By analyzing interface between mission, purpose and servant behavior, it was possible to make an assessment of mission statements, and identified that 100% of the companies studied have at least one element of mission, purpose and servant behavior in their statement. The overall average of mission statements was 2.57, purpose was 1.90 and servant behavior 3.66, showing that the elements of the purpose are those that are presented in a lower level.

Among the elements analyzed in mission statements, product / service was the most cited among the companies, making clear the area that the company operates, followed by customer, evidencing importance of this agent to organizational existence. With regard to purpose, the most cited element in organizations' mission statements was sustainability, and regarding servant behavior, it was generally identified that the element most often quoted in mission statements was desire to help.

Then, a general comparative analysis was performed between the elements of the mission, purpose and servant behavior dimensions, according to Table 4.

Table 4 - Correlation of Mission, Purpose, and servant behavior. Source: Research (2016)

Correlation	Mission	Purpose	Servant behavior
Mission	1	0.74	0.27
Purpose		1	0.18
Servant behavior			1

According to Table 4, through Pearson correlation test, it was obtained evidence of correlation between mission and purpose (0.74), evidencing that mission statements that use more mission elements tend to make more use of purpose elements. This may happen because some elements have the same meaning, both for mission and purpose.

Regarding the correlation between mission and servant behavior, it was found a weak correlation (0.27). The correlation between mission and servant behavior, although weak (0.27), still has a higher correlation when the correlation between purpose and servant behavior is performed (0.18). Correlation between mission and servant behavior (0.27) can be explained by the reason that both have elements that are synonymous, but that among the universe analyzed are not so representative.

Finally, a cluster analysis was performed, aiming to gather data in groups considered more homogeneous, from similar characteristics. The method chosen in this study to apply clustering analysis was the complete bonding method using Euclidean distance. The correlation matrix, at a significance level of 5%, showed that the correlation was statistically significant ($t = 128.7345$, $G.L = 8513$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$), being classified as strong (0.81). Using the complete bonding method, the companies were divided into four groups, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 - Comparison of the business segment by groups. Source: research (2016)

Group	Wholesale	Energy	Service	Transport	Retail	Total
1	12.90% (n=4)	0,00% (n=0)	29.03% (n=9)	22.58% (n=7)	35.49% (n=11)	100% (n=31)
2	10.71% (n=6)	41.07% (n=23)	30.36% (n=17)	1.79% (n=1)	16.07% (n=9)	100% (n=56)
3	4.77% (n=1)	33.33% (n=7)	28.57% (n=6)	9.52% (n=2)	23.81% (n=5)	100% (n=21)
4	21.74% (n=5)	56.52% (n=13)	8.70% (n=2)	0,00% (n=0)	13.04% (n=3)	100% (n=23)

From groups identification, four distinct groups were created, which include the results considered more homogeneous. The grouping of the results can be visualized in Figure 2.

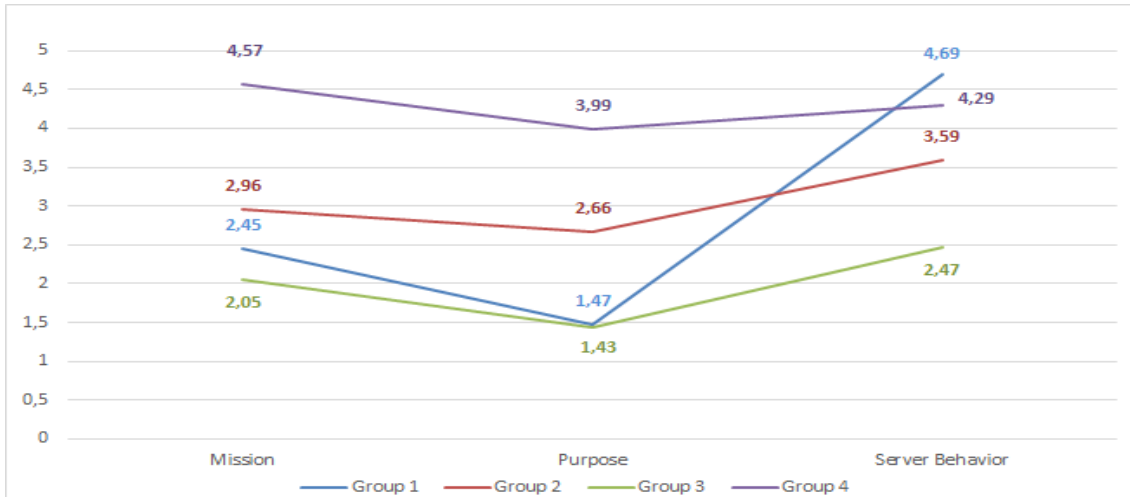


Figure 2 – Results agrupment. Source: research (2016)

Group 1 is composed by 31 companies, and presented general average in the evaluation of the mission, purpose and servant behavior of 2.45, 1.47 and 4.69, respectively. The companies that compose this group obtained higher averages in the dimension servant behavior and smaller averages in purpose dimension, justifying the nomenclature attributed to the group: "I serve without much purpose". Predominance of companies that occupied this group is of retail segment, followed by service segment and it is worth mentioning that this group does not include any energy company.

Group 2 is composed by 56 companies, and presented general average in mission, purpose and servant behavior of 2.96, 2.66 and 3.59, respectively. This group received the nomenclature of "I know who I am and I am able to serve". The nomenclature of the group corresponds to the fact that these companies have obtained an approximate average in the three dimensions mentioned above. For this group, the predominant segment was energy and the one that had less participation were to transport companies.

Group 3 is composed by 21 companies presenting general average in mission, purpose and servant behavior of 2.05, 1.48 and 2.47, respectively. This group included the companies that obtained the lowest averages in all dimensions analyzed. This group was given the nomenclature of "I am half-off." This nomenclature was attributed to the fact that it obtained the lowest averages in the dimensions analyzed. The segment that predominated this group was energy segment and the segment that had the least participation were wholesale companies.

Group 4 included 23 companies, with a general average of 4.57, 3.99 and 4.29, respectively. This group was the one that presented the highest averages in the dimensions studied and for that reason was assigned the title of "Servant Identity", that is, it is composed of companies that have elements of mission, purpose and servant behavior present in their respective mission statements. Once again the group is led by energy companies and this time, it did not include any transport company.

Considering the evaluation of the averages as very low, low, moderate, high and very high, it can be said that in Group 1, the companies that fit are those that have a low average mission, very low purpose and moderate servant behavior. In Group 2, companies are rated as having low average mission, low purpose and moderate servant behavior. Group 3 presents the less favorable situation, considering that the companies in this group presented the lowest averages, the mission being considered very low, a very low purpose and low servant behavior. Group 4 presented the most favorable situation, with the averages of the analyzed attributes all classified as moderate.

Final considerations

This research aimed to identify interfaces between mission, purpose and servant behavior in service companies. In order to achieve this objective, a comparison was made between mission statements, evaluation of each mission statement, taking into account from the writing, as an extension, analysis of presence or not of elements defined by literature. When analyzing each mission it was identified that all the companies studied present even indirectly some element of the mission. Another aspect identified was that there are very long mission statements that are repetitive and that some companies use a wording that can confuse the understanding of the mission statement.

Regarding the study of purpose, considering that only one company in the studied universe makes a public declaration of the purpose, it was decided to analyze the presence of purpose elements in mission statements, which made it possible to identify that the companies that obtained a satisfactory average in the purpose were the companies that obtained in the evaluation of the mission a good score in the elements of relationship with employees, relationship with society, socio-environmental responsibility and strategic positioning. This can be justified because these elements are synonymous with purpose elements.

The research also aimed to analyze the presence of servant behavior elements in the mission of service companies. It was possible to identify elements of servant behavior in mission statements of the companies studied. There is evidence of consistency between mission and servant behavior, and that statements contain at least one element, even if indirectly.

The main theoretical contributions of this study are related to the systematization of the content of mission statement, identification of contributions in the management literature about organizational purpose, and the integrated analysis between mission, purpose and orientation in serving, through servant behavior.

In terms of managerial implications of this study, it presents practical applicability, since it can guide companies on elaboration of a consistent mission statement, as well as the adoption of the purpose and applicability of servant behavior. The study also contributed to identification of flaws in mission statements, which may assist managers in reshaping these statements. Due to the relevance of the study, it is suggested that this research be applied to other groups of companies. Another possibility of research is to apprehend the content of mission, purpose and servant behavior through in-depth case studies, with possibility of conducting interviews with managers to identify in a more consistent way the presence of the studied attributes, especially in the companies that have them informal way.

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