

*Full Length Research Paper*

# A comparative analysis of web-based corporate mission statements

Eyyup Akbulut<sup>1</sup> and Yavuz Bayram<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Relations and Advertisement, Faculty of Communication, Ege University, Izmir, Turkey.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Journalism, Faculty of Communication, Ege University, Izmir, Turkey.

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**This study aims to identify the nature of the mission statements of the largest companies in Turkey and around the world and to analyse these statements in a comparative fashion. To that end the web-based mission statements of companies have been examined according to a content analysis method with three distinct criteria, which are used frequently in the literature. In order to determine whether there is a difference in the nature of the mission statements according to where the companies are located, independent groups t-test has been applied. As a result of this study it has been determined that all the companies utilize relatively qualified mission statements and that there is no significant difference between them.**

**Key words:** Mission statements, stakeholders, websites.

## INTRODUCTON

Mission statements, which are examined in quite a few disciplines such as management, communication and sociology, can be defined as statements, which describe an organization's basis of existence, its goals and procedures. Since the 1980's, when they gained popularity, mission statements are accepted as an important element of strategic management (Davies et al., 2003; David, 1989; Campbell, 1991).

Mission statements are the first step of the process of creating a corporate identity (Goodman, 1994) and their basic function is to identify an organization's goal, objective and values. It is possible to speak of the various advantages mission statements provide to the organization. Some of these can be put into order in the following ways (Hackley, 1998; Bart et al., 2001; Bartkus et al., 2000):

- 1) To indicate the organization's orientation.
- 2) To ensure the organization's goal congruence.
- 3) To inflict a high sense of common purpose among the employees.

- 4) To contribute to an efficient management strategy.
- 5) To enable a better decision-making process, more open communication and better employment.
- 6) To gain trust and support from the local and foreign stakeholders.
- 7) To increase the employees' psychological motivation.
- 8) To convey moral values.
- 9) To obtain a positive image in the eyes of the stakeholders.
- 10) To expose your distinctive competency in comparison with the organization's competitors.
- 11) To ensure that the employees provide better service to clients.
- 12) To outreach the competition expectancy of the shareholders.
- 13) To improve leadership.
- 14) To motivate the employees on moral grounds.
- 15) To designate the organizational culture.
- 16) To transform the responsibilities of groups whose organizational goals are set into measurable missions.

Even though there is a consensus about the importance for the success of the organization to convey the mission statements concerning stakeholders; it is not possible to speak of an agreement about the content of the mission

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [yavuzbayram@msn.com](mailto:yavuzbayram@msn.com).

statements (Bowen, 2005). For example, while Want (1986), expresses that an ideal mission statement's goal has to contain elements such as principal management targets, organizational identity and the organization's policy and values; Bart (1998) argues that a mission statement should include a total of twenty elements, amongst which there are objective, values/philosophy, distinctive competency, competition strategy, the aspired public image, the company's location and non-financial goals. Pearce II and David (1987) however, prefer a shorter list and state that ideal mission statements should contain the following elements: target customer or markets, basic product/services, geographical area, core technologies, development, sustainability and profitability, organizational philosophy, core competence, aspired public image. Certain authors (Dalton and Croft, 2003; Potter, 2006; Bowen, 2005; Austin and Pinkleton, 2006; Goodman, 2004) maintain that the mission statements' nature should be such that they can provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the sector the organization operates in?
- 2) How does the organization aim to reach its goals?
- 3) What kind of strategies is the organization going to utilize in order to reach these goals?
- 4) What are the organization's crucial performance factors and abilities?
- 5) What are the organization's behavioural standards and values?
- 6) In which geographical area does the organization operate in?
- 7) How important are the stakeholders for the organization?

In their study on the mission statements of business schools Davies and Glaister (1997) argue that mission statements should include eight components such as industry, target customer population, geographical area, values and philosophy, excellence oriented motivation, societal contribution, distinctive competency, a future vision and financial goals. In this study Davies and Glaister's classification has been used.

Nowadays almost every company organization makes use of mission statements that are conveyed to their stakeholders through printed or virtual environments. However not every mission statement may function as expected. In other words, the mission statement's quality is as important as its existence (Dieker, 2001). Moreover, a mission statement that is not planned and presented well enough can in some situations have disadvantageous results for the company's operation.

In the literature there are several methodologies and approaches concerning the quality of mission statements. Bartkus et al. (2004) classifies these methods and approaches under three headings:

- (1) The incorporation of key stakeholder parties into the mission statements: An ideal mission statement should

not only include particular stakeholder groups, but also customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and the society which are among the most important stakeholder groups.

- 2) The incorporation of certain elements (industry, target customer population, geographical area, values and philosophy, excellence oriented motivation, societal contribution, distinctive competency, a future vision and financial goals) into the mission statements: An ideal mission statement should have all the above-mentioned elements.

- 3) The mission statements' quality with regard to the four targets such as: the future perspective of the company, control, principals of decision-making and the employees' motivation. While the company's future perspective implies the supply of information to stakeholders about the organization's future goals through mission statements, control is the delineation of the boundaries of the organization's operative area. The inclusion into the mission statements of philosophy and values that guide the organization in the process of decision-making corresponds to the target of "principals of decision-making". The last of the four targets, the employees' motivation, aims to inspire the employees to deliver a good performance in their jobs.

There are a large number of studies in the literature about the quality of the mission statements of companies. In some of these studies the mission statements have been compared according to the regions the companies operate (Bartkus et al., 2004; Bart et al., 2001). However, there is no study that compares the companies in Turkey and other regions. It is the aim of this study to compare the quality of the mission statements, which Turkey's the largest companies utilize with the ones around the world. To that end, within the scope of this study, answers will be sought to the following questions:

- 1) According to the criterion of incorporating certain stakeholders into the mission statements, how is the quality of the mission statements of the largest companies in Turkey and around the world? Does this quality vary according to region?
- 2) According to the criterion of including certain elements into the mission statements, how is the quality of the mission statements of the largest companies in Turkey and around the world? Does this quality vary according to region?
- 3) With regard to the four ideal targets, how is the quality of the mission statements of the largest companies in Turkey and around the world? Does this quality vary according to region?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The objective and importance of this study**

The aim of this study is to compare according to three distinct

**Table 1.** The stakeholders and their alternative expressions used in the mission statements.

Stakeholder	Alternative expressions
Customers	Consumers, buyers
Employees	Workers, workforce, human resources, manpower, staff
Shareholders	Fund holders, investors, stakeholders
Suppliers	Business associates, partners
Society	Community, world, global, social goals, environment, national economies, quality of life.

criteria employed frequently in the literature, the quality of the mission statements, which companies in Turkey and around the world publish on their websites.

In the global competitive environment it is of great importance that companies describe themselves to their stakeholders in the best way possible. The only way for Turkey's companies to keep pace with this competitive environment is to evaluate themselves with reference to the largest companies worldwide. This study enables the companies in Turkey to carry out such an evaluation with regard to mission statements, which are important elements of corporate identity and strategic management.

### Sampling

The study's sample consists of a total of one hundred the largest companies; 50 from Turkey and 50 from the rest of the world. When choosing the companies the latest research data entitled "Fortune 500 Turkey" and "Fortune Global 500", which is gathered by Fortune Magazine regularly every year in order to determine Turkey's and the world's the largest companies, has been employed.

Within the scope of the study the mission statements of Turkish companies have been examined in Turkish and mission statements others has been examined in English. When the websites were not published in Turkish or English, the link "English" on the homepage has been opened and the translated version of the website into English has been examined.

### Instruments of measurement

Within the scope of this study the mission statements that have been acquired from the websites of the largest companies in Turkey and around the world, have been analysed with the content analysis method. Data that has been obtained at the end of the study has been analysed using the packaged software SPSS 16.0 and during the process of analysis, statistical techniques such as  $\bar{X}$  and independent groups t-test have been utilized.

In order to find the mission statements the "home page" of every company has been visited. When no mission statement could be found on this page, either the "about us" page has been looked through or the websites' "search" engine has been utilized.

The concepts in the literature such as "mission", "aim", "philosophy", "values" and "vision" were mostly used interchangeably (Hartley and Bruckmann, 2002; Levin, 2000; Bart and Baetz, 1998; Pearce II and David, 1987). For this reason, while the mission statements of companies were identified within the scope of this study, this fact has been taken into consideration and statements that could not be found directly under the "mission" heading were sought after under the other headings mentioned previously.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the first criterion that determines the quality of the mission statements is concerned with the quantity in which the stakeholders that hold a key position are represented in these mission statements. The stakeholders in

question however are sometimes entitled in different ways. For this reason similar studies previously conducted have been examined and words that designate the same stakeholder have been used interchangeably. The stakeholder names and their alternative expressions that are used in the mission statements can be seen in Table 1.

The second criterion that is applied for the purpose of measuring the quality of mission statements has to do with the presence of certain elements in these statements. The elements (categories) used for the second criterion and the relevant expressions are presented in Table 2.

The last criterion that determines the quality of mission statements is concerned with at what rate these statements can acquire the four targets of excellence. While the first target of excellence "the organization's future vision" is concerned with whether there is a vision with regard to the future in the mission statements, the "control" target expresses the existence of information in the mission statements about at least two of the sector, target customer population, geographical area and distinctive competency categories. "Principals of decision-making" is the third target of excellence and contains in the mission statements information related to organizational philosophy and values.

The last target "motivation of employees" means that the mission statements contain information related to motivating and inspiring employees to reach excellence and contribute to society. Table 3 shows each target of excellence and their content.

## RESULTS

### Explanatory information

In this comparative analysis, which is conducted with the aim of examining the quality of the mission statements of the largest companies, the mission statements of a total of one hundred companies, fifty each from Turkey and the world, have been studied. Yet, it has been observed that some companies both in Turkey and the world have not made place for mission statements on their websites. The amount of companies whose mission statements could be obtained was 35 for Turkey and 36 for the world, which amounts to 71 in total (Table 4).

### The distribution of stakeholders

When we look at the total distribution of stakeholders Turkey's and the world's the largest companies target in their mission statements (Table 5) it can be seen that most of the companies in both regions plan mission

**Table 2.** Elements (categories) to be found in mission statements and relevant expressions.

Category	Relevant expressions
Sector/Industry	Finance, steel, oil etc.
Target customer population	Residential, companies, buyers, users.
Geographical area	Worldwide, Asia, Europe, countries, global.
Organizational philosophy/values	Fair, integrity, trust, wellbeing, friendly, harmony, honesty, responsibility, respect for people, socially responsible, transparency.
To motivate employees to reach excellence and to inspire them	Leading, the best, outstanding, dominant position, most admired, pioneer, forefront.
To motivate employees to contribute to society and to inspire them	Society, community, nation, social benefit, teamwork, work environment.
Distinctive competency	Innovation, low cost, high quality, high standard, efficient, advanced technology, technological expertise, world-class performance, creativity, economic, speed, privileged.
A future vision	Become, will be (not "we are"), future, create, dedicate, advancing, anticipated, growing, to set goals.
Financial goals	Create value, protect value, growth, profit, returns, financial strength, financial performance, economic value.

**Table 3.** Four targets of excellence and their content.

Target of excellence	Content
The company's future vision	A future vision
Control	Sector; target customer, geographical area, distinctive competency.
Principals of decision-making	Organizational philosophy/ values
Employees' motivation	Excellence oriented motivation, motivation based on contribution to the employee or to society.

**Table 4.** The distribution of companies according to the presence of mission statements.

Region	Amount of targeted companies	Amount of companies with mission statement	Amount of companies without mission statement
Turkey	50	35	15
The World	50	36	14
Total	100	71	29

statements oriented towards two or three stakeholders. Four companies in Turkey and one in the world have not included any stakeholder in their mission statements. It has been established that the number of companies, which include in their mission statements all the stakeholders in key positions, are close in approximation (6 companies in Turkey and 7 in the world).

As a result of the independent groups t-test, which is conducted to test whether the total amount of stakeholders included in the mission statements varies according to where the companies are located, no significant variation has been observed and for this reason the

results are not tabulated.

### The targeted stakeholders

Table 6 shows which stakeholders take place the most in mission statements. Accordingly, most of the companies target customers (28 companies in Turkey and 31 in the world) the least targeted stakeholders in Turkey are shareholders (management) and in the world, it is suppliers (13 companies).

As a result of the independent groups t-test which is

**Table 5.** The amount of stakeholders targeted in mission statements.

Stakeholder No.	Turkey	The world	Total
5	6	7	13
4	3	8	11
3	9	8	17
2	9	11	20
1	4	1	5
0	4	1	5
Mean	2.6	3.1	2.9

**Table 6.** The targeted stakeholders in mission statements.

Stakeholder	Turkey (35 companies)		The world (36 companies)		Total (71 companies)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employees	24/35	68.6	24/36	66.7	48/71	67.6
Customers	28/35	80.0	31/36	86.1	59/71	83.0
Shareholders	10/35	28.6	18/36	50.0	28/71	39.4
Suppliers	13/35	37.1	13/36	36.1	26/71	36.6
Society	16/35	45.7	28/36	77.8	44/71	62.0

N: represent the number of companies out of the total in Turkey and the world

**Table 7.** Independent groups t-test results related to stakeholders targeted in mission statements according to region.

Stakeholder	Location	N	Mean	S.D.	t value	p value
Employees	Turkey	35	1.31	0.47	- 0.169	0.866
	The world	36	1.33	0.48		
Customers	Turkey	35	1.20	0.40	0.679	0.499
	The world	36	1.14	0.35		
Shareholders	Turkey	35	1.71	0.46	1.869	0.066
	The world	36	1.50	0.51		
Suppliers	Turkey	35	1.63	0.49	- 0.089	0.929
	The world	36	1.64	0.49		
Society	Turkey	35	1.54	0.50	2.898	0.005*
	The world	36	1.22	0.42		

N: represent the total number of companies in Turkey and the world, \* p value<0.05

conducted to test whether the stakeholders included in the mission statements vary according to where the companies are located, it has been established that among stakeholders in different regions only society shows a significant variation (Table 7). According to this, when average values are taken into consideration, it is established that compared to the companies in the world, the companies in Turkey lay more emphasis in their mission statements on the society element ( $\mu_{\text{Turkey}} = 1.54$ ;  $\mu_{\text{World}} = 1.22$ ).

### The distribution of the total elements utilized in mission statements

When we look at the regional distribution of the elements expected to be present in mission statements, we can see that most of the companies (10 in Turkey and 13 in the world) only give place in their mission statements to seven of the nine elements.

However, when the utilization of all the nine elements in total is taken into consideration, it may be said that

**Table 8.** The amount of elements utilized in mission statements.

Element No.	Turkey	The world	Total
9	1	6	7
8	4	7	11
7	10	13	23
6	6	3	9
5	8	5	13
4	4	1	5
3	0	0	0
2	2	0	2
1	0	1	1
0	0	0	0
Mean	5.9	6.9	6.4

**Table 9.** Content analysis results related to the elements used in mission statements.

Category	Turkey (35 companies)		The world (36 companies)		Total (71 companies)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sector/Industry	29/35	82.9	33/36	91.7	62/71	87.0
Target customer population	6/35	17.1	11/36	30.6	17/71	23.9
Geographical market	22/35	62.9	28/36	77.8	50/71	70.4
Organizational values and philosophy	27/35	77.1	31/36	86.1	58/71	81.7
Excellence oriented motivation of employees and inspiration transmission	28/35	80.0	34/36	94.4	62/71	87.3
Societal contribution oriented motivation of employees and inspiration transmission	26/35	74.3	28/36	77.8	54/71	76.0
Distinctive competency	30/35	85.7	33/36	91.7	63/71	88.7
A future vision	29/35	82.9	27/36	75.0	56/71	78.9
Financial goals	11/35	31.4	24/36	66.7	35/71	49.2

N: represent the number of companies out of the total in Turkey and the world

compared to the companies in Turkey, the ones in the world are better off. Thus, while in Turkey only one company makes place in its mission statement for all of the nine elements, in the world this number reaches six (Table 8).

As a result of the independent groups t-test, which was conducted to test whether the amount of elements that needed to be utilized in mission statements varied according to where the companies are located, no significant variation among regions has been observed, and therefore the results have not been tabulated.

### Elements utilized in mission statements

When we look at the elements used in mission

statements, we observe a little difference between the companies in Turkey and the world (Table 9). While companies in Turkey use the distinctive competency element (85.7%) the most among the nine elements, the ones in the world prefer the element excellence oriented motivation of employees and inspiration transmission (94.4%) more. The least used element both in Turkey and the world is the target customer population element (17.1% for Turkey and 30.6% for the world). As for the average of both regions, distinctive competency (88.7%) stands out as the element used the most.

As a result of the independent groups t-test which is conducted to test whether the elements given place in the mission statements vary according to where the companies are located, it has been established that among the elements in question there exists only a significant

**Table 10.** Independent groups t-test results related to elements in the mission statements according to region.

Element	Location	N	Mean	S. D.	t value	p value
Sector/Industry	Turkey	35	1.17	0.38	1.109	0.271
	The world	36	1.08	0.28		
Target customers	Turkey	35	1.83	0.38	1.322	0.191
	The world	36	1.69	0.47		
Geographical market	Turkey	35	1.37	0.49	1.376	0.173
	The world	36	1.22	0.42		
Organizational values and philosophy	Turkey	35	1.23	0.43	0.970	0.336
	The world	36	1.14	0.35		
Motivation I	Turkey	35	1.20	0.40	1.847	0.069
	The world	36	1.05	0.23		
Motivation II	Turkey	35	1.26	0.44	0.340	0.735
	The world	36	1.22	0.42		
Distinctive competency	Turkey	35	1.14	0.35	0.785	0.435
	The world	36	1.08	0.28		
A future vision	Turkey	35	1.17	0.38	- 0.803	0.425
	The world	36	1.25	0.44		
Financial goals	Turkey	35	1.68	0.47	3.128	0.003*
	The world	36	1.33	0.48		

N: represent the total number of companies in Turkey and the world, \* p value<0.05

variation between regions in terms of financial goals (Table 10).

Accordingly, compared to companies in the world, companies in Turkey lay more emphasis on the financial goals element ( $\mu_{\text{Turkey}} = 1.68$ ;  $\mu_{\text{World}} = 1.33$ ).

#### **Distribution related to the acquisition of the mission statements' four targets of excellence**

As can be seen in Table 11, with regard to the mission statements used by most of the companies, it may be said that they have achieved a total of four targets of excellence (13 companies in Turkey, 17 in the world). The only company that could not reach any target of excellence was one from Turkey.

As a result of the independent groups t-test which is conducted to test whether the rate of the mission statements' acquisition of the four targets of excellence varies according to where the companies are located, no significant variation between regions has been observed, consequently the results have not been tabulated.

#### **The distribution of the four targets of excellence according to companies**

Table 12 illustrates the distribution of the four targets of excellence according to the companies in different regions. Accordingly, most of the companies both in Turkey (94.3%) and in the world (91.5%) were able to achieve in total two targets of excellence.

As a result of the independent groups t-test which is conducted to test whether the amount of mission statements that have reached the four targets of excellence varies according to where the companies are located, there was no significant variation observed between regions, thus the results have not been tabulated.

#### **The distribution of the criteria related to the quality of mission statements according to companies**

With reference to the three different methods developed for measuring the quality of mission statements, Table 13 illustrates the average scores obtained per criterion by

**Table 11.** The amount of mission statements that have reached the 4 targets of excellence.

Targets of excellence	Turkey	The world	Total
Target 4	13	17	30
Target 3	12	12	24
Target 2	6	6	12
Target 1	3	1	4
Target 0	1	0	1
Mean	2.9	3.2	3.1

**Table 12.** The distribution in terms of companies, of the amount of mission statements that reached the four targets of excellence.

Targets of excellence	Turkey (35 companies)		The world (36 companies)		Total (71 companies)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Target 1	29/35	82.9	27/36	75.0	56/71	78.9
Target 2	33/35	94.3	32/36	88.9	65/71	91.5
Target 3	27/35	77.1	31/36	86.1	58/71	81.7
Target 4	20/35	57.1	27/36	75.0	47/71	66.2

N: represent the number of companies out of the total in Turkey and the world

**Table 13.** The comparison of the general averages related to the quality of the mission statements according to companies.

Evaluation criterion	The highest score	Turkey	The world	Total
The targeted stakeholders in the mission statements	5	2.6	3.1	2.9
The elements used in the mission statements	9	5.9	6.9	6.4
The mission statements' acquisition of the four targets of excellence	4	2.9	3.2	3.1

the companies in Turkey and in the world. According to this, it may be said that the companies in Turkey and those around the world, also obtain similar values with regard to the three different criteria. As a result of this study it has been also established that the company averages according to region have obtained an approximate value to the highest score previously determined for each criteria.

At the end of the study all of the findings are evaluated, it may be said that the characteristics of the companies in Turkey and those around the world are similar with regard to the quality of the mission statements.

## Conclusion

As a result of this study which compared the mission statements of a total of 71 of the largest companies from Turkey and the world according to three distinct quality standards:

- To include in the mission statements all the stakeholders in key positions.
- The presence in mission statements of elements or

components such as: sector/industry, targeted customer population, geographical area, organizational philosophy/values, excellence oriented motivation of employees and inspiration transmission, societal contribution oriented motivation of employees and inspiration transmission, distinctive competency, a future vision and financial goals.

c) The mission statements' acquisition of four targets of excellence which consist of the companies' future perspective, control, principals of decision-making and as last the employees' motivation, it appeared that the companies had acquired quite a good average with regard to each criterion.

Another fact that appears as a result of this study is that compared with the largest companies in the world, Turkey's the largest companies have a little lower average.

However, it may be said that the companies in Turkey utilize mission statements qualified to compete with global companies. Since nowadays information and communication technologies have gained great importance in our social and professional life, the fact that a significant amount of companies both in Turkey and the world do

not make place for mission statements on their websites points to an important shortcoming with regard to the companies' self expression towards their related stakeholders.

In this period in which e-commerce practices and global competition conditions are predominant, it may be said that in the long run such a shortcoming can have a negative effect on the company performance as well. For this reason, as the starting point of strategic governance, companies need to be more attentive towards issues such as the formation of mission statements, the transmission of these to related stakeholders and their quality.

Mission statements are one of the most important indicators of corporate identity, corporate identity on the other hand, provides both the grounds for the corporate image to be shaped and helps the organization in its first step towards gaining a positive reputation in the eyes of key stakeholders. Thus, it may be said that the quality of mission statements not only deeply influences companies in terms of corporate identity, but also in terms of corporate image and reputation. However, when we look at the literature, it can be seen that not enough studies exist which examine the relation between the quality of mission statements and the image and reputation of organizations. Hence, any future study related to this topic will be an important contribution to the literature.

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