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Going Green of Mission and Vision Statements: Ethical, Social, and Environmental Concerns across Organizations

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Abstract

Mission and vision statements are a critically important piece of business communication from an organization to all of its stakeholders [1]. Today, it is quite easy for even a small company to create a website and sell goods all over the world and most companies around the world have increasingly adopted mission statements with corporate values as a top issue on their agendas. These mission and vision statements must be constantly revised and modified in response to changes within the organization and its environment [1]. In contrast to traditional strategic management approaches, today's companies have focused on the social strategy activities, such as philanthropy, corporate values for having the competitive advantage [2]. Therefore, social responsibilities should also be considered to include concerns for social factors and the environment within the missions of the companies [3]. Personal and ethical values constitute the basis of their mission statements with an emphasis of the strategy formulation along with the significance of international or global operations [4]. Following the information that the natural environment is an increasingly salient component of the global commercial environment as is reflected in growing academic and practitioner interest in corporate management of environmental issues [5], "going green" is analyzed in current mission and vision statements as the basic emphasis which acquires the definition of involving the concepts of ethical behavior, social responsibility and protection of the environment.

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Keywords: Mission statement, vision statement, green, corporate social responsibility, environmental sensitivity, ethics.

1. Introduction

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the environmental impact on humankind has significantly increased and that is why organizations choose to adopt socially responsible practices too. Many organizations are emphasizing the significance of international or global operations in their mission statements and current mission statements involve "going green" as an emphasis [1]. As governments and organizations consider how to respond to the challenge of going green and move forward with initiatives

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that include environmental concerns, the time appears right for them to consider the process of aligning the organization around the importance of taking action to be more “green” as well as efficient, so this should begin at the time that the organization first develops an awareness of the context, in which environmental initiatives can be realized and carry all the way through to implementation of the strategy [6].

Moving away from a passive and even defensive response to environmental regulations, an increasing number of organizations have adopted a more cooperative and proactive stance on environmental protection [7]. The organizations become more responsive to performance accountability for its environmental legitimacy initiatives while taking advantage of new opportunities [6]. Rising energy prices and changes in the global climate have put ecology issues on the strategic planning of corporate executives worldwide [8]. Going green and managing waste streams more efficiently does not just mean demonstrating environmental accountability and responsibility, for some, it shows fiscal accountability and responsibility, too [9]. Companies engaging in environmental management and green innovation actively can not only minimize production waste and increase productivity, but also improve the overall productivity, increase corporate reputation, and thereby, enhance corporate competitiveness under the trends of popular environmentalism consciousness of consumers and severe international regulations of environmental protection [10-13]. The company needs credibility or society’s consent to be able to act and achieve its objectives [14], so enterprises should not only be concerned about making a profit, they also should be engaged in actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and what is required by law [15].

The definition of “going green” includes the concepts of ethical behavior, being socially responsible, and protecting the environment [1]. These social responsibility implementations have become an increasingly important discourse within the literature of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)/ Business Ethics [16]. Corporate governance, stakeholder interests, social impression, and environmental protection are all facets of CSR [17]. In addition, over the past 40 years, it has become beholden on the business world’s most visible citizens to demonstrate an awareness of CSR [18]. Concerns about CSR have also increased markedly in recent years and corporations are under increasing pressure to refrain from socially harmful activities and to engage in activities that improve societal welfare [19].

Environmental management, one of the three grounds of CSR, has gained increasing attention in companies, that is, some years ago, it was indicated that, over 50 per cent of the world’s largest companies publish environmental or CSR reports [20]. Furthermore, it is stated that the financial markets increasingly value the benefits of eco-efficiency and that the market assigns more value-relevance to environmental information [21].

Besides the effects of corporate values on financial aspect, corporate values have a major effectiveness on organizational behavior, enclosing ethics. Therefore, ethical concerns are an important area in business practices and research endeavors in the field of organizational chain management, in particular, ethical concerns become evident in situations of asymmetric relationships across organizations (e.g. in terms of power and dependence.) Creating and maintaining a positive ethical climate has been recognized as a considerable standpoint of institutional management, which includes to minimize the costs associated with more intrusive, possibly less effective, means of formal social control, the costs of damaged reputation, and reduced asset value when ethical transgressions come to light [22].

Business ethics as well as international business analysts acknowledged that the examination of ethical issues associated with multinational corporations is quite important, because they have a very powerful impact on social, economic, and political environment here with the globalization. Nevertheless, there are several studies, which identify reasons for “going green” of corporations like stakeholder suppressions, ethics/ regulatory compliance programs, crucial events, and top management attempts. Beside these expressions, “corporate ecological responsiveness” and “environmental responsibility” should also be considered, by mentioning the term of “green”. According to Bansaland Roth [23], understanding the motives for corporate ecological responsiveness is critical for two reasons. “...First, this understanding

could assist organizational theorists to predict ecologically based behaviors. For example, if corporations adopt ecologically responsible practices merely to meet legislative requirements, then firms will engage in only those activities that are mandated. Second, this understanding could expose the mechanisms that fosters ecologically sustainable organizations, allowing researchers, managers and policy makers to determine the relative efficacy of command and control mechanisms, market measures and voluntary measures...”

Environmental responsibility is the responsibility for environmental standards shared by all those whose actions affect the environment and it represents the notion, that a company has even more responsibility to the environment and the world around it than an individual [24].

As from the second half of the twentieth century, there has been a dramatic increase in the consumption of resources such as water, mineral fertilizers, fossil fuels, paper, as well as increased levels of deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions, particularly CO₂ [25]. Also, environmental problems such as the global warming problem (IPCC, 2001) and the waste processing problem (OECD, 2001) have been quite serious over a couple of decades [26].

Naturally, all of these facts indirectly and directly influence the operation and the role of organizations as the centers of civilization development [27]. And, as we focus on for-profit organizations, we can observe that in the last ten years many companies have decided to take up the so-called eco-friendly strategy [28]. Different motives lead companies to make the decision to go green [29]. Among them we can cite tactical reasons (e.g. avoiding fines for breach of environmental legislation, heavy taxes and bad publicity), marketing reasons (i.e. to exploit new market niches), strategic reasons (i.e. to gain the trust of the environmentally aware, influential stakeholders as well as to reduce the operating costs, reducing risks) and altruistic or moral reasons [27].

Based on companies' response to the question of environment, they can be divided into three groups: green companies, companies that are on the way to becoming green and others [27]. According to Saha and Darnton [29], many different companies have adopted a green position, which refers to where they are positioned within the total market from the green point of view. They argue that it is a company's green positioning which represents their green image that is perceived by the public and how much they communicate green credentials to the public, whether accurate or not, has a significant effect on their green position, therefore a company's green position needs to be considered in terms of what is perceived from their reputation rather than how they compare with competitors and this is because a company may be greener than its competitors, but they may not be as green as what they portray...” Above all however, it must be emphasized that our study is a point for displaying the increasing pressure on organizations' mission and vision statements of “going green”. With growing scrutiny and complaints from both political and public arenas, it can be argued that there is a now a pressing need for these organizations to manage green programming and performance in a constantly changing environment [6]. In consequence, companies need to make more effort to persuade customers, business partners and the public that they are green and therefore positively distinct from competitors [27].

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Objectives of the Research

This research focuses on the companies, found within the “Turkey's 500 Largest Private Companies” research held by Capital Magazine 2010 [30].As the main objective of this research, the mission and vision statements of these companies are then analyzed to determine their components with respect to social responsibility, environmental struggles and ethics.

As the literature has been reviewed, it has been found out that the existing studies mainly do not focus on presence of the concepts of ethical behavior, being socially responsible, and protecting the environment in the vision and mission statements of the companies. There are only some studies

concerning these values of the European and American companies [1,31] and on that account, this research intends also to complete the lack in this scope of subject.

2.2 Limitations of the Study

We have mainly two limitations in this study. In first place, we have only taken companies' mission and vision statements into consideration. In the second place, we have analyzed a sample of the companies listed in "Turkey's 500 Largest Private Companies" [30]. This may limit the generalization of the research.

2.3 Type of the Research

With the exploratory qualitative research, a "content analysis" is chosen as the research method considering the objectives. Content analysis is a necessary tool in the study as purpose of the research, to explore and observe the patterns that may emerge in the social strategy value statements of the random sampled "Turkey's Top 500 Industrial Enterprises", through collecting data mostly from their mission and vision statements of their corporate web sites and also via e-mail and through telephone interviewing approach. Secondly, the manifested values by the collected social strategy value statements need to be systematically categorized in order to make valid presumptions on them.

Content analysis is a "set of methods for analyzing the symbolic content of any [written] communication. [4]. The basic idea is to reduce the total content of a communication [32]. Since the central idea of content analysis is to classify many words in texts into much fewer content categories; it is the most suitable technique for drawing a model out of rich texts. [4]. Content analysis technique requires an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest contents of communication. [4]. During the implementation of this evaluation process, a set of procedures must be developed, in order to make valid inferences from the text that is being analyzed [33,34].

So as to perform a thorough content analysis, these rules will have cautiously been respected and applied for this research. The objectivity is supplied when the researcher and the independent sorter obtained the same results from the same data. A systematic analysis will be obtained when the inclusion or exclusion of categories is done in a consistent manner to avoid biases of the researchers.

To ensure the validity of the research, "semantic validity" will be taken into account. Weber (1990, cited in Bakoğlu and Aşkun, 2005; 26) [34] indicated that for making valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: different people should code the same text in the same way [35] and also noted that semantic validity exists when people familiar with the texts examine lists of issues placed in the same category and agrees that these words have similar meaning [34].

During the content analysis process, each researcher independently and individually categorized the values such as social responsibility, environmental struggles and ethics manifested by mission and vision statements of the companies, and the independent sorter examined the values, made discussions and the values were placed under same categories with an agreement on a final categorization.

2.4 Research Findings

According to the random sampled data, we have collected data from 170 companies. We stratified our sample according to five intervals, 1-100, 101-200, 201-300, 301-400, and 401-500. 50 companies were chosen randomly from the first section, and then we randomly chose 30 firms from each of the other intervals. In total, we reached 170 companies. General characteristics of the firms are as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of companies according to their ratio of research objectives

	1-100		101-200		201-300		301-400		401-500		TOTAL	
	n (50)	%	n (30)	%	n (30)	%	n (30)	%	n (30)	%	n (170)	%
Vision Statement												
Corporate Social Responsibility	38	76	19	64	12	40	5	17	13	44	87	51
Environmental Sensitivity	33	66	16	54	22	74	11	37	21	70	103	60
Ethics	20	40	3	10	5	17	2	7	2	7	39	22
Mission Statement												
Corporate Social Responsibility	5	10	0	0	4	14	1	4	3	10	13	7
Environmental Sensitivity	7	14	6	20	9	30	3	10	4	14	29	17
Ethics	1	2	0	0	1	4	1	4	1	4	4	3
General												
Corporate Social Responsibility	4	8	1	4	3	10	1	4	1	4	10	6
Environmental Sensitivity	2	4	0	0	4	14	3	10	0	0	9	5
Ethics	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	4	0	0	2	1

Among the first 100 companies, vast majority of companies in CSR (76%) are seen to be sensitive. As we group the companies according to their sectors, all banks give great importance to CSR issues, except two banks. Education takes the first place as an example of the implemented projects, among all. Garanti Bank's "Turkey's Starfish Project" and İş Bank's "81Students in 81 Provinces Project" can be shown as examples. All of the companies in the energy sector show sensitivity to CSR issues without exceptions. Educational so shows itself in energy sector. Petrol Ofisi's "Daddy Send Me to School" campaign is one of the examples in this area. Regardless of the sector, when we look at CSR implementations, the most salient activities are charitable, sports activities including supports for the disabled. Again, Petrol Ofisi stands out various projects in this regard (Community Volunteers Foundation, Deaf Education Center, PO Dynamo Team and so on). Another area researched aside from CSR, is the environmental awareness activities of firms, which showed less participation (66%). In the energy, food and manufacturing sector, all companies showed more sensitivity to environmental projects than other companies do. Ethics is also one of the concerned topics, which had a 40% of a ratio, showing a lower level of sensitivity in comparison with the other two factors. One of the prominent elements in the banking sector is that, all banks adopted the "ethical principles" that is published by the Turkish Banks Association, whereas TEB stands out as an exception in this condition, having its own ethical principles on its webpage. In the next stage of the research, mission and vision statements in their web sites were investigated in terms of three elements (CSR, environmental awareness, and ethics) that are mentioned above. It is striking that in the companies' mission and vision statements the word "ethics" does not take part, only Albaraka Turk used the word "ethics" in its mission statement. In the case of CSR, 8% of the companies give space to this issue in their mission statements and 10% of the companies involve CSR related issues in their visions. Environmental awareness in the corporate mission statements of the companies takes part of a 10% ratio, but there is a low rate (4%) of presence of green issues in their vision statements. When we investigate the companies in terms of these three elements, there is not a noticeable decomposition among companies, according to their sector bases.

When we look at the companies in the 100-200 interval, it's apparent that companies operating in food, energy and metals sector are more responsive to CSR than the firms operating in other sectors are. For

instance, Konya Sugar Refinery (Konya Şeker Fabrikası) is very active in promoting social implementations, such as, bringing issues in organ donation, sports, education, and environmental protection etc. Two companies in the plastics and rubber sector do not promote not any social responsibility projects, whereas BRISA demonstrates a very bright profile in terms of being both socially responsible and environmentally aware, moreover it is quite active in the areas seen to be ethical. In this regard, it might be possible to say that the Sabancı Group, due to the holding' s influence on social responsibility and environmental issues, is very efficient on BRISA' s CSR activities. In this segment of companies, it is obviously seen that the CSR, environmental and ethical issues are ignored in their mission and vision statements, except PFIZER. As for the 201-300 interval, the highest level of environmental responsibility is obtained (% 72) here, among all. From those, it is obvious to notice that the industrial companies are mostly sensitive to environmental issues than the other companies are. The main reason behind this difference could be attributed to their high dependence on chemical substances through their production process, which pollutes the environment more. Again, KOC SYSTEM COMPANY, one of the companies of KOC GROUP, is very supportive with its Green Information Platform, Measures Against Global Warming Forum and it also prized with the Environmental Awareness Award. However, contrary to the industrial firms, none of the retail firms exhibits CSR activities. In the 301-400 interval, the CSR tendency has dramatically decreased, except BALNAK LOGISTICS and TIRE CARTON COMPANY. One of the common characteristics of the companies, which are sensitive to the CSR and environmental issues, is that their main raw materials are derived from nature. In other words, we can evaluate this as a relationship based on their mutual interests with nature. In addition, it is known that some companies, which pollute the earth more than the others do, consistently implement the CSR activities in order to lessen the reactions coming from the civil society. When we look at the bottom of the list (401-500), it is clearly seen that there is an unexpected ratio among companies' CSR and environmental activities. The reason lies behind the higher level of industrial firms' existence in this segment. We will discuss this issue (manufacturing industry vs. service industry) in detail in the conclusion section of our study. It is probably reasonable that our ranking does not include any company, which has ethical plans for their vision statements, but it is surprising to see that in this interval, not even any company mentioned an environmental element in its vision statement too.

3. Results and Discussions

As indicated in the introduction and literature review, the companies were investigated according to their vision and mission statements, which are listed in "Turkey's largest 500 Industrial Enterprises" list of the Capital Magazine[30]and in our study we have focused on the "green responsibility, CSR and ethics" of companies.

According to the results of the research, we have found out that the companies mostly are sensitive and responsive to the environment. They emphasize the products that save energy and resources in the corporate social responsibility titles of their web sites, and they explain the importance of the green responsibility as "a comprehensive approach with economic, environmental and social dimensions, which seeks to establish a balance between the needs of the business world and people, and the availability of natural resources to ensure that current activities do not threaten the future world. " It is also possible to see that firms encourage green activities that are specific to their sector. For instance, PETKIM won an award in the category of energy with its "The Green Energy Saving" project. In addition, MUTLU AKU, which operates in automotive sector, developed certain car design projects that are closely related to energy saving issues, such as "Walking Solar Cars", that are free from engine noise and exhaust smokes.

Moreover, there are also companies that do not involve any "green projects", but there are quite a few of them, comparing to the companies, which are responsive to the CSR projects.

As a general evaluation of the 500 companies, it is clearly seen that there is a distinction between manufacturing industry and service industry, in terms of their eagerness of paying attention to CSR and

green implementations. In addition, some companies in service sector do not emphasize the importance of these discrete activities due to their less interaction with nature, such as using natural resources, polluting air and the sea etc. On the other hand, most manufacturing companies attach greater importance to these events. It could be claimed that they are confessing their sins. Of course, not only the companies are interested with CSR just for exculpating themselves, the largest corporative companies such as great banks and firms that have holding connections are devote greater effort to such kind of activities than smaller firms.

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