Globality Criterion for a Mission Statement: Case Study in Oman



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The need for a new criterion, the globality, in the mission statements of firms implies that the same mission statement of a firm should deliver exactly the same messages to the stakeholders at home and abroad. This criterion should inform the stakeholders of the fundamental message that is the business principles, values, ethics, beliefs, employment, working conditions, production process, product quality, and customer care that are applied by the firm at home, are or will be applied abroad without any deviations. Such a message gives stakeholders confidence in the products and services of the firm, and consequently its organizational performance will be improved, because it shows that they are compatible with international standards. The justifications for this criterion based on the operational effects of globalism, the theories of convergence and industrial organization, and the values of strategists of organizations.

Keywords: Globality Criterion, Mission Statement, Strategic Management

1. Introduction

Vision and mission statements of a firm regardless of its size and nature are the most important steps in the process of strategic management for efficient organizational performance. A vision statement should answer the question "what do we want to become in the long run". Studies on US and EU firms have shown that there is one criterion for a good and effective vision statement that is it should not exceed two lines and preferably one sentence. Its importance derives from the fact that it should be established first by the agreement of all important managers and executives in a firm because it is the first step in the process of strategic management. However, the second step is the development of a mission statement, (McGinnis, 1981; Baetz, Bart, and Mark, 1996).

A mission statement should answer the question "What is our business". It is a declaration of a firm's reason for being, and an enduring statement of purpose that distinguishes one firm from its rivals. Its significance emanates from the fact that it is developed by the agreement of all managers, and is the basis for the third step in strategic management process that is the establishment of long-term objectives and the formulation of strategies that a firm wants to achieve. Moreover, it is the foundation for organizational priorities, plans, work assignment, managerial job

design and structures, as established by the father of modern management, (Drucker, 1974). A mission statement is also called a statement of purpose, philosophy, creed, beliefs, business principles and defining our business. Vision and mission statements are normally displayed in a firm's premises, and found in its annual and internal reports, and agreements with its suppliers and customers, (Drucker, 1974; King and Cleland, 1979; Thompson and Strickland, 2003).

2. Methodology and Research Design

This research is qualitative and has two main purposes. The first is to determine the extent to which the mission statements of the largest three business organizations in the sultanate of Oman are compatible with the well-established criteria for effective mission statements in strategic management. It points out the effects of the lack of any of those criteria, and the relationships amongst them. The second purpose is to introduce both the proper justifications and the need for a new and additional criterion for mission statements of firms regardless of size, nature, and place of operations.

The justification for the sample size is that those three business organizations significantly contribute to the economy of the sultanate of Oman and are the largest at their industries, namely; petroleum exploration and production, banking, and telecommunication. However, the sources of this research are the websites of these organizations, annual reports, and relevant literature and research.

3. Literature Review

There are a number of reasons for a firm to develop an effective mission statement. Such a statement provides a standard performance for allocating resources, facilitates the transition of objectives into a work structure, and specifies unanimous organizational purposes which are translated into objectives for standard performance, (King and Cleland, 1979). The significance of effective mission statements of firms to the efficient organizational performance is well established in literature. The development of a mission statement is a big step toward management effectiveness, (Druker, 1974), and there is a positive relationship between effective mission statements and organizational performance, (Bart and Baetz, 1998). Firms with effective mission statements have twice the average return on shareholders' equity than those firms without mission statements, (Rarick and Vitton, 1995). In August 1999, *Business Week* reported that firms with mission statements had achieved a 30 percent higher return on certain financial measures than those firms without such statements.

There are strong and substantial researches conducted by most practitioners and academicians of strategic management concluding that an effective mission statement of a firm regardless of its size and nature should include all the following twelve criteria or components. Most significantly, it has been emphasized that the lack of any criterion adversely affects the efficiency of organizational performance. Needless to say that so far the validity of these findings has been neither disproved nor disputed.

1- Reconciliation amongst the firm's stakeholders divergent views, (Drucker, 1974; Steiner, 1979).
2- Customers of the firm in terms of their anticipations, needs, and wants, (Drucker, 1974; McGinnis, 1981).
3- Products or services' utility, (Drucker, 1974; Abell, 1980; Thompson and Strickland, 2003).
4- Geographical markets of the firm where it competes, (David, 2005).
5- Use of current technology, (McGinnis, 1981; David, 2005)
6- Commitment to long term profitability and growth of the firm, (Hills and Jones, 2002).
7- The firm's philosophy such as basic beliefs, values, aspirations, and ethical priorities, (Freeman and Gilbert, 1988).
8- The social responsibility or policy of the firm to wards social, community, minorities, and environmental issues, (Collins and Porras, 1996; Waddock and Graves, 1997).
9- Concern for the firm's Employees, (Carrol and Hoy, 1984).
10- Self-concept that identifies the distinctive competence or major competitive advantage of the firm in comparison with its rivals, (David, 2005)
11- Clarity in the sense that it is broad in scope but neither overly general nor excessively specific, (McGinnis, 1981).
12- Length of a mission statement should not exceed two hundreds words, (Steiner, 1979; David, 2005).

4. The Need for the Globality Criterion and its Justifications

So far, the globality criterion for an effective mission statement has been neither introduced in strategic management, nor discussed, nor considered as an essential component in the mission statement of a firm. However, it is suggested that the justifications for the introduction of the globality criterion originates from the operational effects of globalism that have impacted all organizations regardless of size, nature and place of operations, as well as states, and stakeholders. It is well established that the effects of globalism have resulted from information technology development, namely; E-Business, and E-Commerce, the 1994 World Trade Agreement (WTO), and the largest regional free-trading blocks; the TRIAD, namely; the European Union, the NAFTA, and the Four Tigers, (Zimmerman, 1998; Rajesh, 1999; Becker, 2000; Coopers, 2000). As a direct result of globalism, foreign direct investment has grown more than three times faster than the world output of goods; the European Union (EU) has caught up with the United States to share the position of the world largest foreign direct investor, (Deresky, 2002). Moreover, global standardization of goods and production process have become both the most important strategic objectives for organizations to ensure organizational performance at home and overseas, and the natural expectations of customers worldwide, (Mintzberg, 1979; Ohmae, 1995).

It is submitted that the globality criterion is also justified on the basis of two theories. The first is the convergence theory which describes the phenomenon of the shifting of individual management styles to become more similar to one another, and advocates that demands of industrialization and of worldwide coordination and competition tend to factor out differences in organizational-level process, such as

choice of technology and structure, (Deresky, 2002). It is clear that this theory establishes that management styles, production processes, products, services, structures, and technology of organizations are no longer different regardless of size, nature, and the country of operations. Therefore, stakeholders should be informed of such indifferences and harmony by the mission statements of firms that should include the globality criterion. The second theory is the industrial organization which contends that in order for a firm to gain and maintain its competitive advantage, the external factors of the firm are more important than its internal factors and should be considered first when devising strategies, as organizational performance is primarily based on external factors, such as economies of scale, barriers to market entry, production differentiation, and level of competitiveness, (Davis, 2005). It is well known that external factors are uncontrollable economical, social, cultural, demographical, environmental, political, legal, technological, and competitive events and trends that may benefit or harm the competitive advantage of the firm. There are interdependent relationships between the external factors of the home country of a firm and those of foreign countries, because the former can be affected by the latter, and vice versa. Therefore, the mission statements of firms should be globally oriented by including the globality criterion to minimize any unexpected any adverse effects of external factors, and to maximize any positive effects thereof.

Moreover, the justifications of the globality criterion do not only derive from the operational effects of globalism and the theories of convergence and industrial organization, but also from the approaches or values adopted by strategists of multinational firms, such as the CEO of General Electric and that of Colgate. Reuben Mark, former CEO of Colgate, maintains that a clear mission statement must make sense internationally to improve organizational performance, (Dumaine, 1979). In the 1994 Annual Report of GE, the CEO, Jack Welch, repeatedly emphasized in his letter to the shareholders that the institutionalization of boundaryless behavior which is increasingly a way of life at GE, has shaped its culture and helped to improve its competitive advantage. According to Welch, the institutionalization of boundaryless behavior is a value that encourages managers to look and adopt practices, ideas to improve organizational performance, and solutions to their own problems from outside the organization regardless of the country of origin, (Hills and Jones, 2002). It can clearly be concluded that these statements give a proper recognition to the positive relationship between the globality criterion of a mission statement and the financial efficiency of the firm to gain and maintain competitive advantage. So, naturally the lack of this criterion will have adverse effects on both the efficiency of the organizational performance, and the competitive advantage of the firm. Such effects will surface in organizations and then be realized by the management in the long-run.

Therefore, based on the above justifications, I would add the thirteenth criterion that is the globality of the firm's mission statement. It has been hidden for a long time, unrecognized and unmentioned in mission statements, even though it is the natural and inevitable product of globalism. It should be applied to and included in the mission statements of all firms regardless of size and nature, whether multinationals, large, medium and small-sized firms. The multinationals operate globally at home and overseas, whereas large, medium and small-sized firms have

the potential to operate overseas and to become global. Needless to say that the significant contribution of small and medium-sized firms which have fewer than 500 employees should not be underestimated, as they are 98% of businesses in developed economies and impacted by globalism and local competition, (Deresky, 2002; Longenecker *et al.*, 2003).

The criterion implies that the same mission statement of a firm should deliver exactly the same messages to the stakeholders at home and abroad, regardless of the country of operations. It should inform the stakeholders of the fundamental message that is the business principles, values, ethics, beliefs, employment, working conditions, production process, product quality, and customer care that are applied by the firm at home, are or will be applied abroad without any deviations. Such a message gives stakeholders confidence in the products and services of the firm because it shows that they are compatible with international standards related to quality and safety.

The significance of this criterion is that it is neither reasonable nor practical for such firms to deliver and their stakeholders to receive messages at home different from those at overseas through mission statements. Different messages create confusion to the stakeholders, and definitely lead to business practices at home different than those at overseas. If there are different messages, then these firms will be perceived and regarded as having double standard in their operations, and even labeled with discriminations and unethical conduct. Such negative perceptions are neither conducive to their business image, nor have positive impact on their organizational performance. Therefore, it is suggested that this criterion must be included as an essential component in a mission statement, and the lack of any criterion will definitely lead to the lack of globality of a firm's mission statement, and inevitably renders it ineffective even if most of the criteria are complied with.

5. Backgrounds of the Largest Business Organizations in Oman

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Bank Muscat, and Oman Telecommunication Company (Omantel) are the largest business organizations at their industries operating in monopolistic or oligopolistic market structure in the Sultanate of Oman. Their backgrounds provide clear insights on the significant contribution to Oman economy.

PDO is a multinational organization that has started its operation since 1937, and presently operating in oligopolistic market structure in the Sultanate of Oman. In 1937, it was named Petroleum Development (Oman and Dhofar), and started the exploration and production operations in Oman on behalf of Iraq Petroleum Company. It consisted of four shareholders each with 23.75%; the Royal Dutch/Shell Group, Anglo-Persian Company –now British Petroleum, *Compagnie Francaise les Petroles* (CFP) – now TotalFina-Elf, East Development Company – now a subsidiary of Exxon Mobil, and Partex 5%. In 1967, Petroleum Development (Oman and Dhofar) changed its name to PDO as a result of take over, and consisted of Sell 85%, CFP 10%, and Partex 5%. In 1974, the Government of Oman acquired 60% of shareholdings in the PDO which now has three multinationals; Shell 34%, CFP 4%, and Partex 2%.

Bank Muscat is also a multinational organization with assets worth over USD 8.5 billion, and mainly operating in oligopolistic market structure in the Sultanate of Oman. It has overseas operations in India, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, and is owned by a number of shareholders of various Omani government organizations, and the HSBC 15%.

Omantel is the largest communications service provider of fixed line and internet/data provision, and operating in pure monopolistic market structure in the Sultanate of Oman. It has a great potential to become a multinational organization with overseas operations in the Gulf countries as currently competing for tenders in the State of Qatar. It was incorporated in 1999 as a closed joint stock company with 70% of its stocks owned by the Omani government, and the remaining owned by shareholders from Oman and the Gulf countries.

6. The Lack of Certain Criteria

Having examined the mission statements of the three largest business organizations cited in the Annexure, it is found that the mission statement of PDO is not rightly called "Statement of General Business Principles" but in fact it should have been called "code of conduct", because of its length and detailed content. Such an excessively detailed length of a mission statement could be counterproductive because it stifles creativity in the formulation of an acceptable mission or purpose, and could be the base for rallying opposition, so vagueness is recommended as it permits more flexibility in adapting to changes in the internal and external environments of the firm, (Streiner, 1979). The Statement of PDO should not have included "the Objectives", because organizational objectives are long term and annual, which are normally included in internal reports and documents of the firm, (David, 2005). In fact, the objectives of PDO are more like a vision statement, which does not even satisfy the criterion thereof. Moreover, the Statement of PDO has failed to state its distinctive competitive advantage and competence.

As to the mission statement of Muscat Bank, it does not specify three criteria. It does not state the utility of its products and services, the use of up to date technology, and its distinctive competitive advantage and competence in the financial service industry. However, the mission statement of Omantel does not also include six criteria, namely; reconciliation of stakeholders' views, geographical market, commitment to long term profitability and future growth, firm's philosophy, use of current technology, and concern for its employees.

Most importantly, because of the lack of any of those criteria in the mission statements of these organizations, the globality criterion is not complied with. It is suggested that should globality criterion be incorporated in the mission statements of the three organizations, it should state to the effect that "*The organization consistently applies to its stakeholders at home and abroad the same management principles, values, ethics, beliefs, working conditions, production process, product quality, and customer care.*"

7. The Effects of the Lack of Certain Criteria

Having scrutinized the mission statements of the largest three business organizations in Oman, it is concluded that none of them is completely compatible with the thirteenth criteria above stated. However, although a high degree of compatibility has

been found, each mission statement of these organizations does not include a number of criteria. It is hard to understand why those organizations have not satisfied them even though they are the largest in Oman. The lack of these criteria renders these statements ineffective and misleading. The lack of products or services' utility does not inform the stakeholders of what the firm produces or serves, and subsequently the geographical market criterion becomes indefinable and unclear. However, the lack of the criterion of the current technology used by the firm is more alarming as the stakeholders are not informed of whether not the firm is actually using up to date technology. Therefore, there is a doubt about the innovative products and services offered by the firm. The term "innovative" products and / or services do not satisfy this criterion because innovation does not mean that the use of up to date technology.

The lack of the criterion of concern for a firm's employees directly and negatively affects both the criterion firm's philosophy, and that of public image, ethics, and beliefs. Employees are the makers and breakers of any organization, so they are the most valuable assets therein. When a firm does not show any concern for its employees, stakeholders will have a negative attitude towards the firm leading to mistrust in its products and/or services, consequently, organizational performance will decline, (Kotter and Heskett, 1992). Similar effects result from the lack of the criterion of the distinctive advantage of the firm and that of commitment to long term profitability and future growth. Stakeholders are not informed of the competitive advantage position of the firm in a given marketplace to attract them to do business transactions with the firm. They are not informed of what does the firm have or do better than its rivals in terms of resources whether human, capital, technological, and/or financial. Moreover, they are not informed of the extent to which the firm is consistently committed to generate profit and grow in a given marketplace.

8. Conclusion

An effective mission statement of a firm regardless of size and nature must include the thirteenth criteria if a firm wants to gain and maintain its completive advantage in the long run. Firms with ineffective mission statements can only be effective in a monopolistic or oligopolistic market structure, but far from being competitive and efficient in a pure competition market structure which prevails as a result of globalism. The lack of any criterion will inevitably lead to non-compliance with another, and consequently the mission statement becomes infective. These criteria are like a chain, and should be complied with by being included in any mission statement of a firm regardless of size, nature and country of operations without exception; otherwise long-term organizational performance and efficiency will be adversely impacted. An ineffective mission statement means both inefficient performance and ineffective strategic management process. Most importantly, the globality criterion which is justified on the basis of globalism, theories of convergence and industrial organization, and values of strategists, is the utmost essential component for an effective mission statement. The lack of any criterion will definitely lead to the lack of globality criterion and inevitably render the mission statement ineffective even if most of the criteria are complied with.

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Annexure

The mission statement of Bank Muscat states that

Our mission is to be the best bank in the region by

- Providing a high return to our shareholders
- Providing a high return to our customers at an affordable cost by being innovative and introducing new products and channels of service
- Developing and motivating our employees who are the source of our strength
- Being a responsible corporate citizen.

The mission statement of Omantel stipulates that

Provide high quality Telecommunications services at reasonable prices, through effective teamwork, in order to satisfy the needs of our valued customers.

The Mission Statement of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) provides that

Statement of General Business Principles

Objectives

The objective of PDO is to engage efficiently, responsibly and safely in the exploration, production, development, storage and transportation of hydrocarbons in the Sultanate of Oman. The Company seeks a high standard of performance with the aim to further the long term benefits of its Shareholders, its Employees and the society of the Sultanate of Oman at large.

Responsibilities

Various inter-related responsibilities of the Company are recognised:

a) To Shareholders

To develop and protect the investment and interest of the Shareholders in accordance with their objectives and guidelines, and to operate at all times in a cost efficient and profitable manner, bearing in mind that the Company has a clear and important duty of care in its dealings with the Shareholders' investments and interests.

b) To Employees

To provide all Employees with safe and healthy conditions of work and adequate and competitive conditions of service. On an equal opportunity basis, to develop in an optimal manner the skills, talents and potential of its Employees. The Company will pay particular attention to the recruitment, training and development of Omani Employees. It will respect the rights of all Employees as provided for in the Basic Law.

c) To those with whom we do business

To seek mutually beneficial relationships with contractors, vendors and other companies engaged in the exploration and production of oil and gas in the Sultanate of Oman and to promote the conduct of business in accordance with these principles.

d) To Society

Appreciative of the guidance of His Majesty the Sultan, to conduct its business as a good and responsible corporate citizen of the Sultanate of Oman, observing the Laws applicable to its conduct and the principles embedded in the Basic Law, and paying proper regard to health, safety and the environment consistent with its commitment to contribute to sustainable development.

These four areas of responsibility are seen as inseparable. It is the duty of the Management of the Company to continuously assess priorities and to discharge the various responsibilities as best it can under the prevailing circumstances on the basis of that assessment.

Business Integrity

The Company insists on honesty, integrity and fairness in all aspects of its business and expects the same in its relationship with its contractors and suppliers. Its contracting-out policy will be on the basis of open and competitive bidding, where possible, with transparent procedures, providing equal opportunities to qualified contractors and suppliers. It will not, directly nor indirectly, offer, solicit, accept or pay bribes in any shape or form, and requires its Employees to act likewise. Employees will exercise the utmost care to avoid putting themselves into a position where they may be called on to repay favours in a manner detrimental to the Company's interests.

Employees shall not take advantage, for their own or for the profit of others, of their position in the Company or of information gained in the course of their employment. They have a duty to notify the Company of any outside interest which could, either directly or indirectly, present them with a conflict of interest, or which involve them in a commercial relationship with the Company.

All transactions on behalf of the Company must be transparent and appropriately described in the accounts of the Company, in accordance with established and recognised procedures and standards, and be subject to audit. The strictest principles will be applied in maintaining the integrity of the accounting records.

The Company and the Community

a) The Company

The Company accepts and endeavours always to act through the Laws of the Sultanate of Oman in a socially responsible manner. The Company does not have, and therefore does not state, views on either national or international political matters, and it will abstain from participation in politics and interference in political matters. It will not make payments which are, or could be construed to be, of a political nature either in a national or an international context. The Company has, however, a legitimate right and responsibility to make its views known on matters that affect the interests of the Company, its Employees or its Shareholders and on

matters which affect the general interest, where the Company has a contribution to make which is based on its particular knowledge.

The Company is mindful that the utmost co-operation with the Government of the Sultanate of Oman enables the Company to maximise its ability to contribute to the exploration for and development of the Sultanate's hydrocarbon resources and to pursue its objectives.

b) The Community

The Company considers that the most important contribution it can make to the social and material progress of the Sultanate of Oman is in performing its primary activities as efficiently as possible. It will thereby endeavour to promote the economy of the Sultanate by engaging local enterprise in the course of its business, where appropriate and feasible. In addition, the Company recognises its responsibility to take a constructive interest in societal matters, which may not be strictly related to its business. The Company must not and cannot pre-empt the activities of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman in providing and maintaining social facilities and services. However, in consultation with the Board of Directors and the Government, the Company will make use of opportunities which arise through community, educational or donation programmes and appropriate societal development projects within the area of its operations, to enhance the well-being of the citizens of the Sultanate at large.

Health Safety and the Environment

The Company will Endeavour to conduct its business in such a way as to protect the health and safety of its Employees, its contractor employees and other persons affected by its activities, as well as to protect the environment, minimise pollution and seek improvement in the efficient use of natural resources. In full compliance with the Laws of the Sultanate of Oman, it will pursue a policy of systematic and continuous improvement in the measures taken to protect the health, safety and environment of those who may be affected by its activities and it will apply more stringent standards and procedures where the Company considers it appropriate to do so. It expects, and where appropriate will encourage its contractors to adopt the same objectives in the conduct of their business.

The Company has established a Health, Safety and Environmental Protection Policy and is guided in the conduct of its business by the principle that Health, Safety and Environmental Protection forms an integral part of, and are as important as, all other primary business objectives.

Communication

The importance of the Company's activities for the Sultanate of Oman as a whole and for individuals, both Employees and others, and the subsequent need for open communications is fully recognised. The Company therefore endeavours to disclose as much information as possible about its activities to legitimately interested parties, subject to any over-riding consideration of confidentiality proper to the protection of the Company's interest and the interests of third parties.