

How the Mission Internalization Works? An Empirical Research

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to analyse the process of the definition and deployment of a company's mission, to obtain a better understanding of the employees' role. On the basis of the literature investigating the dimensions of the internalization of a mission (leadership, importance, knowledge, co-workers' engagement and implication), the paper proposes a model that shows the cause and effect relationships among these dimensions. A survey addressed to Spaniards was launched, and 400 valid responses were received. The data was analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for an initial model that shows the causal relations among the dimensions for the internalization of a mission. An array of Lagrange multiplier tests suggested modifications for refining the model and proposed one with acceptable fit indices, where the last dimension to be accomplished is "Implication". The findings show a direct effect between "Leadership" and "Implication", and double mediation. On the one hand, there is second order mediation through "Knowledge" and "Importance". On the other hand, there is mediation through "Co-workers' engagement". This sequencing among the five dimensions of the internalization of the

mission gives new clues and evidence for managers that will help them to define and implement a successful mission statement.

KEYWORDS

Mission internalization, Mission deployment, Leadership, Co-workers engagement implication.

1. Introduction

A mission statement is commonly recognized by academics and practitioners as the first step in strategic management (David, 1989). A mission statement provides a clear sense of what the organization stands for (Bates & Dillard, 1991; Campbell, 1989). Traditionally, it has been understood that the aim of a mission statement is to make a public declaration of the purpose, goals, products, markets, and philosophical views of the organization (Bart, Bontis, Taggar, Sufi, & Lyons, 2001; Campbell & Yeung, 1991; Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Klemm, Sanderson, & Luffman, 1991). In fact, (Bartkus, Glassman, & McAfee, 2000, p. 28) suggested that “the best mission statements simply define the company’s business and suggest a future goal”. The second step is the internalization of the mission (“IM”) by the employees, by which is meant providing a full sense of the mission that enables the employees to work in the confidence that their work fulfils their own personal objectives and at the same time is aligned with the organizational mission (Cardona & Rey, 2008).

Alegre et al. (2018) conducted a literature review on mission statement highlighting the importance of an effective implementation of an organization's mission. The benefits (financial and non-financial) that can be envisaged to arise from a consistent mission definition and a wise implementation are of paramount importance, and this is a good reason for understanding how the mission is defined (Baetz & Bart, 1996; Bart et al., 2001; Denton, 2001; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Although “mission” is a wider concept than “mission statement”, there is no doubt that the effort of writing the mission statement is a key element of the definition of the mission (Ireland & Hitt, 1992). A useful mission statement that guides and orients the daily operations of the firm can only be created by following a process that guarantees its effective development (Mullane, 2002). Frequently cited as the benefits of a mission statement are: (i) the provision of a sense of direction and purpose for the organization (Bart et al., 2001; Ireland & Hitt, 1992); (ii) a focus on the allocation of organizational resources (Bartkus et al., 2000; Gibson, Newton, & Cochran, 1999); (iii) effective communication with internal and external stakeholders (Bartkus et al., 2000; Klemm et al., 1991) ; and (iv) a description of the values of the organization that will guide and inspire employees (Collins & Porras, 1996; Denison & Mishra, 1995; Ireland & Hitt, 1992).

Apart from research on the benefits, another stream of research analyses the components of mission statements (Baetz & Bart, 1996; Bart & Tabone, 1999; David, 1989; Davis, Ruhe, Lee, & Rajadhyaksha, 2007; Klemm et al., 1991). Since a mission statement is considered critical to an organization's performance, many studies have attempted to identify the main features of mission statement that have the most impact on a firm's output (Duygulu, Ozeren, İşıldar, & Appolloni, 2016; Macedo, Pinho, & Silva, 2016). Macedo et al. (2016) suggest a model to examine the mediating role of organizational commitment to explain the mission-performance relationship. Effectively, organizational commitment plays an important role in this link. Additionally, Desmidt (2016) studied how employees perceived mission statements and the effect of the mission. Although perceived mission statement quality and employee mission engagement are positively linked in the public sector, employees' mission acceptance differs depending on the message receiver, behavioural integrity and the mission ambiguity (Desmidt, 2016).

According to Quinn and Thakor (2018, p. 78) a corporate mission and purpose "reflects something more aspirational. It explains how people involved with an organization are making a difference, gives them a sense of meaning, and draws their support." Marimon et al. (2016) focus their analysis on the internalization of the mission, which they define as "the way in which employees assume the mission as their own and allow it to become part of their personal beliefs and values". Accordingly, it is not enough to have a solid and consistent mission, and neither is it enough to invite employees to join in the process of defining the mission. The next step that must be accomplished on this path is the internalization of the mission. This provides guarantees and evidence that the mission is not just a statement on the organization's website or in its brochure, but is a statement of value that has real meaning for the employees. In their recent publication, Marimon et al. (2016) distinguish five dimensions in the multifactorial mission internalization construct: leadership, knowledge, importance, co-workers' engagement and implication (see annex). However, although it has been proved to be a correlation among these factors and they have been grouped as second order factors, there is still no evidence about the sequence in which these dimensions have to be accomplished.

Because of this lack of knowledge, it is useful to study the path that must be followed to define, create and manage a mission statement that has a real impact on the success of a

company. Consequently, the main aim of this article is to propose a sequence of the dimensions of the internalization of the mission (leadership, knowledge, importance, co-worker's engagement and implication). In this sense, the main goal of this study is to assess a model of the process of the mission statement's internalization.

Results show that, on the one hand, there is a second order mediation through "Knowledge" and "Importance". On the other hand, there is mediation through "Co-workers' engagement". In addition, the model also proposes a direct effect from "Leadership" to "Implication". Our research will contribute to the understanding of the creation of a mission statement and will suggest the path that should be followed for the effective internalization of the mission within organizations.

Our study answers the need identified by Desmidt et al. (2011) for more research on how to create a successful mission statement. Along the same lines, Mullane (2002) proposes future research on how to use a mission statement as a common strategic tool. Managers and practitioners experience significant problems in creating and implementing their mission objectives, so this is not easy work (Bart, 2007). In this sense, our study contributes towards a theoretical contribution for the definition and implementation of mission statement, as well as, helping managers to understand how a mission statement is defined and implemented. Therefore, this research sheds light on the path towards a true internalization of the firm's mission by its employees. Globalization and environmental complexity create a need for effective mission statements.

The article is organized as follows: the next section presents the literature review and the proposed sequence, and then the methodology is described and the results of the analysis presented. Finally, the results are discussed and the theoretical and practical contributions of the paper are explained.

2. Literature review and proposed sequence

According to the holistic conceptualization of mission (Rey & Bastons, 2018) the development of a mission is structured in three interconnected dimensions: formal, dynamic and motivational. Mission as a dynamic practice considers that a mission statement is a formal exercise but you need some processes to take it to life. It is relevant achieve the extent to which the organization is doing what it states in its mission (Bart, 1997; Suh, Houston, Barney, & Kwon, 2011). The formulation and implementation of a company's mission is a

difficult task, and more research is needed to guide companies in this process to put the mission into practice (Lundberg, 1984; Macedo et al., 2016). In this sense, as mentioned above, Marimon et al. (2016) propose a measure with five dimensions to assess the internalization of the mission. First, the leadership dimension refers to the extent to which the managers of the company are committed to the mission. Their engagement with the mission can be seen through their daily actions and decisions. Second, the knowledge of the mission refers to the extent to which an employee knows what the mission is, and is able to explain, in his or her own words, the mission statement. Third, the dimension of the importance of the mission can be defined as the extent to which an employee feels that the mission is important in fulfilling his or her vital contribution to society. Fourth, co-worker's engagement is the extent to which an employee feels that his or her colleagues are committed to the mission. Finally, fifth, the implications dimension can be considered to be the extent to which an employee participates in conceptualizing and creating the mission of the company and how he or she thinks about it as time goes on.

In order to propose the sequence for how these five dimensions are used to internalize the mission, we review some previous studies in which different aspects of this process were considered.

Previous studies suggest that the understanding and commitment towards the corporate mission are higher at managerial levels than with non-managerial employees (Desmidt, 2016; Vandijck, Desmidt, & Buelens, 2007). Their hierarchical position will provide access to more and relevant mission information and a broad view of the company's purpose. For that reason, if the managers buy the mission and clearly communicate it through different means (in a formal and informal way), employees will better understand the core ideals of the mission.

In many companies, managers are responsible for communicating a clear and attractive mission statement to the employees. This is complicated work because it is very important, yet difficult, to transmit a compelling mission without ambiguity. Desmidt (2016) states that: "High levels of 'mission comprehension ambiguity' have a detrimental impact on the motivational power and perceived attractiveness of organizational goals". In this sense, managers have to identify and communicate the key concepts of the mission statement. A

positive attitude of top management towards the mission can be considered the first step towards achieving an effective mission internalisation. The management's commitment to the corporate mission should affect employees' understanding of the mission. Consequently, we hypothesize that:

H1: The attitude of top management and leaders towards the mission ("Leadership") has a positive impact on the understanding of the mission statement ("Knowledge").

Notwithstanding the above, the internalization of a mission is not simply to know the mission. One of the crucial aspects in mission fulfilment is the degree to which employees know and understand their corporate mission (Bart et al., 2001).

Following David (1989), developing and communicating a clear business mission is one of the most commonly neglected tasks in strategic management. Only a clear definition of the mission makes it possible to set realistic but motivating business objectives. On the same lines, Bart (1997) found that 92 per cent of the managers in his survey considered that their current mission statement was not fully clear or self-evident to the rest of the organization. This author considers that one possible cause for the lack of success with missions could be that many mission statements are not defined and communicated clearly. Therefore, it is important to communicate the mission clearly in a way that can be understood by every employee of the company. Employees must be able to explain and share with their colleagues or with external parties the content and the spirit of the corporate mission. One important dimension is the employees' ability to explain the mission statement in their own words (Wang, 2011). Good communication of the mission statement is essential to the effective dissemination of this knowledge within the company (Mullane, 2002).

Once the organizational members have shared in the knowledge and understanding of the corporate mission, they should consider their own importance in the sense of the need for them to be efficient and to be inspired to improve the organization and society (Collins & Porras, 1996; Wang, 2011). Once they have achieved this understanding, they can support the mission passionately (Bart, 2007). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: An understanding of the mission statement (“Knowledge”) has a positive impact on the assessment of the importance of the mission (“Importance”).

However, when creating a mission it is not enough to hang it on the wall (Mullane, 2002) or to put it on the website (Bart, Bontis, & Taggar, 2001) for it to be known by the employees. It is relevant to consider the importance of understanding the mission statement (Marimon et al., 2016). This is a deep process inside each employee, and each employee really has to live the mission, and not only in an external or formal way. It is necessary to provide employees with time to think about the purpose of the company. According to (Baetz & Bart, 1996), all stakeholders, especially employees, should be involved in creating and developing the mission statement. All employees should know the reasons that gave rise to the corporate mission, and why the mission is important for each of them, for the company and for society. This dimension is a subsequent and further step, and goes beyond a simple understanding of the importance of the mission. If the employees agree the purpose of the company, they will be aware of how they can participate in the process to define and work towards the fulfilment of the mission (Bart et al., 2001).

Once they have realised its importance, employees can think reflectively, plan carefully and work towards the mission (Williams, Morrell, & Mullane, 2014). Based on previous research, the following hypothesis can be put forward:

H3: An assessment of the importance of the mission (“Importance”) has a positive impact on whether the employees work on the basis of and according to the mission (“Implication”).

As we have said before, the top management support towards the mission plays an important role in the process of communicating and deployment the mission (Baetz & Bart, 1996). The dearth of management commitment in the mission implementation could clarify some of the dissatisfaction in mission statements.

According to Desmidt (2016), the effective communication of a corporate mission could be considered as a function of their ability to impact on the employees’ beliefs, assumptions and behaviours. As suggested by Desmidt (2016), higher levels of perceived mission statement

quality are positively related with employee mission engagement. One of the antecedents of perceived mission quality is behavioural integrity. Leaders must look on ways to transcend their own decisions (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). In this sense, managers must encourage employees to fulfil the corporate mission in order to succeed in the market. Moreover, consequently, employees look for the commitment of their colleagues to reinforce their application of the mission. The employee knowledge regarding the mission statement disseminator (usually managers) could influence the motivations towards the mission at all employees' levels.

Top management commitment must involve the full process of defining, communicating and developing the mission statement (Mullane, 2002). In addition, employees must participate in this process. Babnik et al. (2014, p. 623) suggest that “in the process of mission formulation, employees should be included and not only the top management”. The mission will orient the employees' daily work and decision, and in this context, it will be synergies between employees' mission engagement.

Previous research affirms that the provision of top-down communications is not enough to achieve a uniform perception of a mission (Desmidt, 2016). All hierarchical levels of companies must share the mission principles. All different managerial levels and staff members must be involved in developing objectives that are resultant from the mission statement (Mullane, 2002). In this vein, the commitment of leaders towards the corporate mission could influence the engagement with the mission by employees' colleagues, and finally, affecting towards the mission internalization for all. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: The attitude of top management and leaders towards the mission (“Leadership”) has a positive impact on the engagement with the mission by employees' colleagues (“Co-workers' engagement”).

Many authors have suggested that employees must be involved in the process of practising the mission statement (Babnik, Breznik, Dermol, & Širca, 2014; Williams et al., 2014). All the organizational members must be involved if there is to be a guarantee that the mission statement will have a positive impact on the firm (Mullane, 2002) . The involvement of all

employees, not just the commitment of the top management, is crucial in implementing the mission statement (Wang, 2011). To maintain the motivation to work with and accomplish the mission statement over a long period of time, it is necessary for the whole department to work in the same direction. The impact of the engagement of co-workers is relevant to whether their colleagues really commit to the mission. When the majority of individuals are engaged and motivated by the mission statement, the degree of participation by the employees is greater. The involvement with and internalization of the mission in the daily activities of colleagues could influence employees' behaviour. For this reason, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5: The engagement with the mission by employees' colleagues ("Co-workers' engagement") has a positive impact on the way in which the employees will work in line with the mission ("Implication")

One reason for creating a mission statement is to assert leadership (Klemm et al., 1991). The commitment of top management influences the performance-related actions and decisions of employees (Williams et al., 2014). The involvement of leaders in the mission statement, and the strategic role of the mission statement in communications, are important and are powerful mechanisms for implementing and strengthening the mission (Ireland & Hitt, 1992). It is crucial for leaders to disseminate the purpose of the firm in order to establish a good understanding and integration of this purpose in the daily work of the employees (Hirota, Kubo, Miyajima, Hong, & Won Park, 2010). A lack of top management involvement in the process of creating and deploying the mission could be a reason for its failure (Baetz & Bart, 1996). Strong participation by the senior supervisors is therefore recommended for effective mission development (Bart & Baetz, 1998). Lundberg (1984) suggests that managers' commitment to the mission is a common and essential element for mission formulation. Some previous studies, such as that of (Ireland & Hitt, 1992), suggest that a mission statement should be formed only when the top-level managers have made the philosophical and operational commitment required to focus the organization's resources on the accomplishment of the mission. Williams et al. (2014) suggested that commitment by the top management to the mission statement moderates the mission's impact on firm performance

by: (i) identifying and communicating the key concepts; (ii) involving all management levels and functional areas; (iii) setting specific targets related to the mission statement; and (iv) periodically reviewing and revising the mission. This means that it is not only the clarity of the content of the mission that is related to performance, but also the commitment to the mission by the leaders of the company. When managers show by example how to take into account the mission in their decisions and strategies, and how they can translate the mission statement into their daily procedures, employees are truly inspired, and this is a key antecedent to achieving full participation by the employees in the mission. Based on the foregoing, we suggest that:

H6: The attitude of top management and leaders towards the mission (“Leadership”) has a positive impact on the way in which the employees work on the mission (“Implication”)

The proposed model is shown in Figure 1. According to previous literature, the starting point is the commitment by the leadership to the mission that will impact on the participation by the employees in working in line with the mission (implication). One mediation relationship is based on knowing and understanding the importance of the mission statement. Another mediation relationship is the co-worker’s engagement with the mission.

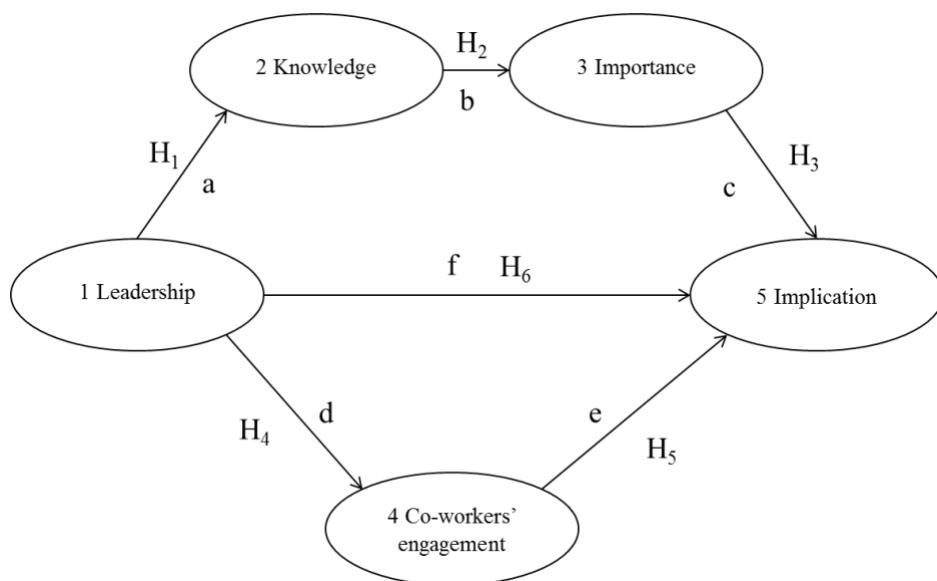


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Methodology

To proceed with the research on the chronological sequence for the accomplishment of the five IM dimensions, we generated a survey of 257 Spanish residents, which was administered April 2015. The target of the questionnaire was the whole Spanish population and it was pre-established a ratio of respondents for the groups of gender and age in order to avoid bias. A specialized company was required to conduct the survey to obtain the sample. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample. The questionnaire consisted of the 18 items of the IM scale and some additional information related to the socio-demographic profile of the respondent.

	Number	%
Gender		
Male	131	51.0%
Female	126	49.0%
Total	257	100%
Age		
Between 25 and 34 years	77	30,0%
Between 35 and 44 years	76	29,6%
Between 45 and 54 years	72	28,0%
Between 55 and 64 years	32	12,5%
Total	257	100,0%
Working status		
Working full time	208	80.9%
Working part time	39	15.2%
School and work	10	3.9%
Total	257	100%
Annual income (in euros)		
< 10,000 euros	43	16.7%

Between 10,000 and 30,000	129	50.2%
Between 30,000 and 40,000	33	12.8%
> 40,000 euros	5	1.9%
No answer	47	18.3%
Total	257	100%
Education		
Basic studies	16	6.2%
High school diploma	64	24.9%
Vocational qualification	50	19.5%
University degree	127	49.4%
Total	257	100%

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample.

The scale used the terms that were established by Marimon et al. (2016). It consists of 18 items arranged in five dimensions. The first step was to confirm the internal reliability of the dimensions and their internal consistency, and to perform a discriminant analysis. Once this had been done, the cause–effect model was developed, in order to explain the “Implication” construct. The model was tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in order to find out the sequence of how the IM dimensions were accomplished. The research model (Figure 1) was drawn from the review of the previous literature.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability and validity analysis for the scale

To examine the dimensionality of the five IM dimensions, five Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were conducted, using EQS 6.2 software. The last objective of a CFA is to validate whether the data fits a hypothesized research model. The five analyses each extracted only one factor. Table 2 shows the statistics for reliability and convergent validity. The reliability of these five factors was then assessed. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency among all items used. In every case Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the composite reliability exceeded the threshold value of 0.7 for internal consistency. Nunnally and

Bernstein (1994) established 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. In addition, the variance extracted for each factor was greater than 0.5. Also, to validate a construct is important to assess the convergent validity to confirm that measures that should be related are in reality related (Hair et al., 2015). Convergent validity was confirmed for all the factors, where all of the items were shown to have significant loads ($t > 2.58$).

Leadership		Knowledge		Importance		Co-worker engagement		Implication	
Lead 4	0.924 (23.698)	Know 6	0.903 (-)	Imp 11	0.892 (16.226)	Co-w 12	0.927 (-)	Impl 18	0.879 (12.201)
Lead 3	0.909 (25.250)	Know 7	0.878 (14.178)	Imp 9	0.981 (-)	Co-w 13	0.921 (9.687)	Impl 16	0.841 (12.274)
Lead 2	0.909 (25.059)	Know 8	0.854 (13.700)	Imp 10	0.889 (15.075)	Co-w 14	0.915 (8.921)	Impl 15	0.783 (-)
Lead 1	0.904 (-)							Impl 17	0.782 (11.580)
Lead 5	0.849 (20.733)								

(*) In each cell the standardized load and in parenthesis the associated p-value.

The cell without p-value were those factors that were forced to one in the CFA.

Alpha Cronbach	0.941	0.851	0.869	0.910	0.840
Range of Cronbach's alpha if one item is removed	0.920-0.939	0.749-0.829	0.813-818	0.863-0.881	0.757-0.820

Range of correlations between items and total corrected scale	0.770-0.854	0.680-0.768	0.748-0.752	0.809-0.832	0.619-0.759
Composite Reliability	0.955	0.910	0.920	0.944	0.893
Average Variance Extracted	0.809	0.772	0.793	0.848	0.676

Table 2. Loads of the five CFAs and statistics for their reliability analyses.

Discriminant validity shows that two measures that are not supposed to be related are in fact, unrelated (Hair et al., 2015). Table 3 provides the results for the analysis of discriminant validity, which was carried out using linear correlations or standardized covariances between latent factors, by examining whether the inter-factor correlations were less than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE). Table 3 shows that the square roots of each AVE were greater than the off-diagonal elements. Discriminant validity was confirmed.

	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge	0.899				
Importance	0.496*	0.879			
Leadership	0.588*	0.675*	0.891		
Co-workers' engagement	0.683*	0.667*	0.699*	0.921	
Implication	0.613*	0.554*	0.634*	0.658*	0.822

(*) Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral)

Diagonal elements are the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 3. Correlation matrix of latent factors.

4.2. Cause–effect model

The model was estimated using the robust maximum likelihood method from the asymptotic variance-covariance matrix (Bentler & Satorra, 2001). The procedure suggested by Bentler and Satorra (2001) was followed, which is based on robust maximum likelihood estimation, and according to Curran et al. (1996), this method behaves extremely well in nearly every condition across sample size, distribution and model specification.

The fit indices obtained in the measurement model estimation showed that the variables did not converge toward the structure established in the model. χ^2 Satorra–Bentler was 283.03, with 129 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000. χ^2/df was 2.19, which is below the acceptable limit of 5. The Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.068 and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.948. RMSEA and CFI are two of the most recommended indexes to assess the global fit of the research model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Therefore, the global fit of the proposed model was acceptable, and it is proposed as a predictor of “Implication”.

“Implications” was regressed on “Leadership”, resulting in an acceptable global fit providing a total effect of 0.684 and an associated t-value of 4.54. In order to analyse the composition of this total effect, the standardized solution of research model is provided in Table 4.

Coefficient	Standardized solution	t-value	Results
(a) Leadership → Knowledge	0.625	8.45	Accepted
(b) Knowledge → Importance	0.823	12.14	Accepted
(c) Importance → Implication	0.375	5.97	Accepted
(d) Leadership → Co-workers' engagement	0.751	12.70	Accepted
(e) Co-workers' engagement → Implication	0.315	3.43	Accepted
(f) Leadership → Implication	0.255	2.24	Accepted
Analysis of decomposition effects.			
Indirect effect (a*b*c)	0.193 (28.18% of total effect)		
Indirect effect (d*e)	0.237 (34.56% of total effect)		
Total indirect effects (a*b*c) + (b*d)	0.429 (62.74% of total effect)		
Direct effect (f)	0.255 (37.26% of total effect)		
Total effect	0.684 (t-value = 4.54)		

1.- Note that each letter (from “a” to “f”) before each coefficients corresponds to the original hypothesis in the research model.

Table 4. Standardized coefficients of the research model Direct and indirect effects of “Leadership” on “Implication”

Table 4 shows the direct effects between the model constructs with the letters from “a” to “f”. Hence, each letter corresponds to one hypothesis of the research model. The second section of the table provides the indirect effects according to the model. The calculations are shown in each line of this second section table. Results indicated that the direct and positive effect of “Leadership” on “Implication” is 0.255 (37.26% of the total effect). This means that commitment by the top management to the mission statement influences the likelihood that employees will work on the mission statement process. However, there is an important indirect effect originating in two mediated paths. First, the understanding of the mission (“Knowledge”) and the estimation of how important it is to have the right mission for the company (“Importance”) have an indirect effect. This indirect effect has

a significant impact on “Implication”, at 0.193 (23.18% of the total effect). Second, the other mediation is the relevance of the engagement and commitment of the co-workers towards the fulfilment of the mission (“Co-workers’ engagement”). This second mediation has an impact on “Implication” of 0.237 (34.56% of the total effect). Therefore, the total of the indirect effects is 0.429 (62.74% of the total effect). To sum up, there is a direct effect and a double mediation from “Leadership” to “Implications” that explains the steps that must be followed for the mission to be created and internalized by employees.

5. Discussion and theoretical and managerial implications

The paper provides clues and evidence for explaining the sequence of attaining the different dimensions of the internalization of a company’s mission. While Marimon et al. (2016) propose the components of the mission internalization construct, we analyse the precedents to the accomplishment of these dimensions. There are some paths that can be performed and achieved simultaneously, but there are other dimensions that have a pre-established sequence, and this order must be respected (Macedo et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2014). Respecting this *tempus* is of paramount importance when managers are defining the mission and the implementation process.

This relationship from “Leadership” to “Implication” is directly (37.26% of the total effect) and indirect (62.74% of the total effect). First, regarding the direct effect, the findings suggest that the managers’ commitment and leadership have a positive influence on the deployment and management of the mission within the company, as suggested by Ireland and Hitt (1992) and Williams et al. (2014). Therefore, top-level managers must accept responsibility for articulating a mission in ways that are meaningful for each stakeholder group. If the leadership is oriented in line with mission statement, this has a significant influence on the participation by the employees in the process of defining and managing the mission within the company. The supervisors’ role and whether they orient their daily decisions in a manner that is coherent with the mission is a key point in engaging the employees to live the mission of the company. If the managers encourage the development of the mission, the employees will participate more and better. These results are consistent with the assertion that leadership is a critical success factor in other fields such as Balanced Scorecard (Heras-Saizarbitoria, Marimon, & Casadesús, 2012; Kaplan & Norton, 1992) or Knowledge Management (Hung, Huang, Lin, & Tsai, 2005; Jennex, Smolnik, & Croasdell, 2007; Machuca & Costa, 2012).

Second, understanding these indirect effects (higher than the direct effect) is a cornerstone for academics and managers to know how to foster and reinforce this link. In this sense, the findings suggest a double mediation to explain the relationship between leadership and employees' participation. The first mediation is through "Knowledge" and "Importance". It is also very important to consider the key role of understanding and identifying the creation of the mission statement and its definition, as this is a critical success factor in obtaining sustainable competitive advantage and a clear position in the market. The first step is that employees can explain the main sense of the mission of the company. The reality of many mission statements is that they are not known and understood by several organizational members. However, it is not enough to know the mission; employees must also understand its importance, and the assessment of the importance is a consequence of the knowledge of the mission. On the path towards employees becoming part of the mission, first comes knowing the mission, and after that, consequently, they can assess its importance. Both steps must be taken and in this order. If one of them is not accomplished, this way to participation is closed. This mediation is a crucial point in whether the employees will create and think about the mission. So, it is relevant that managers communicate the mission and its importance, as previous authors have stated (Bart, 1997; David, 1989).

On the other hand, the second mediation is related to co-worker's engagement. This mediation has stronger weight than the other (34.54% of the total effect). Our results suggest that it is relevant to create a general atmosphere in the company in which all the employees work in the same direction, because this has an impact on the inclination of employees to commit to the mission. One can identify that a powerful aspect in working on the mission is to see that one's colleagues think of it as a light that helps them to orient their decisions and actions. The mission must impregnate the culture and values of the company (Williams et al., 2014). The effectiveness of the mission depends on the atmosphere within the company. In this way, when a new employee is recruited, he or she will be inspired by the commitment of his or her colleagues. Therefore, we advise that the degree to which the behaviour of the employees is consistent with the company's mission should be incorporated into climate surveys. With this information, managers will know specifically the extent to which employees are engaged by the mission and can propose actions to foster and align their commitment to it.

Understanding the path that follows the dimensions of the internalization of the mission statement within a company is very relevant to propose an effective process. Managers

define a mission statement to achieve that employees feels that the mission is important to fulfilling. To obtain that ideal situation, there are different paths but all of them related to employees. Indeed, employees accept a company's mission because they are aligned with it and there is a pro-social motivation to work on it. According to Ireland and Hitt (1992), a mission statement is intended to provide motivation, general direction or an attitude through which actions are guided. The alignment between personal and organizational mission is an effective aspect to be considered here. The consideration that the mission of the company is important is related to the employees' value scales.

To sum up, our findings suggest that, in order to obtain true agreement by the employee to work on the mission, the commitment of the leadership is necessary. This impact is mediated by the consideration of the understanding and the importance of the mission for each employee, and also the influence of the co-worker's engagement. All these factors have an impact on the participation with the mission.

This area of research is particularly valuable for both academicians and managers. First, our study could serve to reinforce the discussion on the mission statement's definition and communication. The process of the internalization of the mission from the top management leader to the employee's implication is a new source to strengthen. From a theoretical view, there is a need to think about the firm's mission and purpose. Canals (2010, p. 203) states in his final thought that "The notion and purpose of the firm that we have outlined here highlights the unique nature of companies as institutions made up of people who seek economic efficiency, but also organizations led and developed by people with motivations that go beyond pure financial aspirations. As important as profit is the final outcome of a management process; board members and senior executives should look at the process that leads that outcome". In this sense, the proposed mediated effects have solid theoretical backing and should be a first attempt to in exploring these relationships. We offered empirical support to clarify the sequence of the dimensions of the internalization of the mission. Form a theoretical perspective our results propose a contribution to current knowledge.

Second, our research will contribute with some practical implications. The challenge facing managers today is to have a thorough understanding of the process from the definition of the mission to the true internalization of the mission statement, and to learn what factors or conditions influence this. We hope that our article sheds light on this and

contributes to the knowledge about the creation, internalization and implementation of the mission within a company.

Our study is focused on the process of the definition, creation and internalization of the mission by employees. Communicating the corporate mission is one thing, but achieving a truly internalization of its meaning is another. Nevertheless, more research is needed to try to assess the impact of this sequence on the performance of the company (economic and non-economic). There are no conclusive arguments about the relationship between a mission statement and performance (Baetz & Bart, 1996; Bart et al., 2001; Peyrefitte & David, 2006). For this reason, future research is needed to assess this relationship.

Annex - Scale to assess internalization of the mission proposed by Marimon et al. (2016)

Dimension	Code	Item
1 Leadership	Lead 1	The managers' behaviour is consistent with the company's mission.
	Lead 2	The managers are committed to the mission.
	Lead 3	Through their example, the managers give visible signs of their commitment to the mission.
	Lead 4	The managers encourage the development of the mission.
	Lead 5	The decisions made by the company are consistent with the mission.
2 Knowledge	Know 6	I am able to explain my company's mission in my own words.
	Know 7	I could explain my company's mission to people outside the organization if I were asked to.
	Know 8	I understand my company's mission.
3 Importance	Imp 9	I believe that the mission is important to society.
	Imp 10	I accept my company's mission because it is aligned with my individual values.
	Imp 11	I think that the company's mission is important to me.
4 Co-workers' engagement	Co-w 12	The behaviour of my colleagues is consistent with the company's mission.
	Co-w 13	My colleagues push the development of the mission.
	Co-w 14	In general, people who work with me are committed to the mission.
5 Implication	Impl 15	I am in a working group at the company where we work on the mission.
	Impl 16	I have participated in the process of defining and reviewing the mission.
	Impl 17	During the year, I spend time reflecting on the company's mission.
	Impl 18	I participate in activities where I can give my own opinion about the mission.

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