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Mission Statements in Hospitality Organizations: Evidence from Hotel Chains

The purpose of this study is to identify common components in mission statements of hotel chains, as missions play important role in strategic management of all kinds of organizations and influence on their performance. The research is based on recognition of "standard" content components, namely customers, markets, image, products and/or services, technology, survival, growth, and profitability, philosophy, self-understanding, and employees in the mission statements of seventeen hotel chains (international and national). The main findings are as follows. The majority of the statements bear 2-4 components, among which the most frequent and best explained is philosophy. In contrast, the hotel chains pay the least attention to image, technologies, and employees. Environmental focus is totally absent. The originality of this empirical research is linked to filling an important gap in the existing literature: unlike to many other organizations, mission statements of hotel chains have been addressed weakly. This study permits giving some practical recommendations on mission statements improvement. The main limitation is linked to consideration of only 17 statements due to poor representation of these strategic communications on official web-pages of hotel chains. Future research should take into account a bigger number of mission statements, as well as to focus on different categories of collective accommodation facilities, restaurants, and other related hospitality firms.

Key words: content components, hospitality corporations, strategic management

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Introduction

Strategic management in hospitality is a vast research field. Reichel (1983) argued for the very need of planning, implementation, and resources allocation in this industry. Olsen and Roper (1998) demonstrated that the classical view of strategy is well applicable to hospitality organizations, although the factor of international operations requires special attention. Wong and Kwan (2001) paid attention to competitive strategies of hotels and travel agencies in Hong Kong and Singapore, and they found that the most demanded strategies are linked to cost competitiveness, people and partners mobilizing, and development of service delivery system. Okumus (2002) highlighted an interesting problem, namely difficulties of hospitality researchers to contribute to the mainstream theory of strategic management, and he also explained how this contribution can be improved. The same issues were discussed by Olsen (2004). Harrington and Ottenbacher (2011) also recorded a difference in the research focus between general and hospitality strategy studies; they stated that the increased global turbulence made the hospitality strategy studies of extraordinary importance. Harrington et al. (2014) claimed that the challenges of these studies are linked to education facilities, theoretical developments, and number and professionalism of researchers. Okumus et al. (2017) discussed the intellectual, conceptual and social structure dimensions of strategic management in hospitality and tourism. Nikolskaya et al. (2019) noted the importance of strategy implementation to infrastructure development in relation to tourism and hospitality. Finally, Köseoglu et al. (2019) revealed that researchers pay too little attention to corporate governance and strategy, entrepreneurship, and some other highly-important issues, but tend to emphasize on strategic management process. Generally, some topics have been studied much more intensively than the others, and, notably, some topics that attract researchers' attention in the general strategic management are almost missed in the hospitality strategic management. Indeed, these cavities should be filled because the worldwide growth of the

hospitality industry makes its organizations important economic agents, and these organizations should be managed by the same principles as in the other industries.

Strategy development includes defining organization mission and its communication as mission statement. Since the end-1980s, much attention has been paid to this issue in the general strategic management literature (Pearce and David, 1987; David, 1989; David and David, 2003; Sidhu, 2003; Williams, 2008; King et al., 2013; Alegre et al., 2018). In tourism studies, this issue has been explored rather deeply, but on occasional basis and relatively to only particular topics (Herremans and Welsh, 2001; Kemp and Dwyer, 2003; Lin et al., 2018; Hjalager and von Gesseneck, 2020). A few previous studies addressed mission statements of hotels (Sufi and Lyons, 2003; Forné, 2015; Karatepe and Kaviti, 2016; Göbel et al., 2017), and their outcomes demonstrate that missions are very necessary in hospitality for effective communication with customers and partners, fixing managerial thought, and business sustainability. Hotel chains resemble true corporations from the other segments of the world economy, although the former are distinguished by more dynamic relationships with customers (i.e., the hospitality business is highly-sensitive to customer emotions, perceptions, and attitudes), deeper involvement in globalization, and often stronger and multiple competition in the industry. Therefore, missions of hotel chains deserve close attention. On the one hand, examination of their statements can permit to understand their specific features and, thus, to contribute to the existing literature on the general strategic management. On the other hand, the same examination can indicate on deficiencies of the available missions and, thus, to make recommendations for their improvement in the light of the general knowledge accumulated during decades of studies focused on the other industries.

The present, essentially empirical study aims at filling the above-mentioned gap, and it reports some basic information about the actual mission statements of hotel chains. Its main objective is categorization of the content of these statements. The modern research in the

general strategic management pays attention to some "standard" components in such statements (Pearce and David, 1987; David, 1989; O'Gorman and Doran, 1999; Azizi and Makizadeh, 2014; Yadav and Sehgal, 2019), and this methodological frame is followed in the present study. Apparently, the "standardized" content of mission statements reflects all main aspects of hotel functioning. Although it cannot be excluded that some industry-specific components of statements can be further proposed to hospitality organizations, this pioneering study focuses on examination of "standard" components that are common for missions of modern organizations, irrespective of their industrial affinity. In the other words, the paper treats hotel chains as "just corporations", not specific organizations.

Conceptual remarks

Missions are among the key elements of organization strategies, and they reflect the very essence of organization activity, purposes, and priorities (Pearce and David, 1987; Bart, 1997; Bartkus et al., 2002; Jordi, 2010; Slinták, 2016; Godoy-Bejarano and Tellez-Falla, 2017; Slintak and Dvorsky, 2019). Mission statements are official communications of missions that can be found in various strategy-related documents, on organization's web-pages, in press releases, etc. As these statements are usually brief (1–3 phrases), these cannot reflect the full spectrum of a firm's interests. In contrast, these reflect top priorities, which themselves are important to realize. Mission statements are highly-important for sustaining the way of organization development, as well as for organization positioning on market and in information environment, finding partners and evaluation of competitors, staff recruitment, and solution of many other particular tasks. In their synthetic work, Alegre et al. (2018) showed the relevance of the mission statement studies to some major theories of strategic management, although much research is yet to be done to conceptualize this relevance. This is because these studies have evolved around intuitive and empirical approaches that are

judged to be worth on their own. Anyway, it is clear that missions are highly important to understand corporate social and environmental responsibility (as it is declared), leadership, and other major issues. For instance, Steensen (2014) explained how the general type of organizational strategy depends on whether and how managerial thoughts are communicated, and mission statements are among the main "channels" of such a communication.

The works in the field of the general strategic management dealing with mission statements are numerous. Indeed, two most important are a rather brief, but seminal article by Pearce and David (1987), which opened the era of research in mission statements, and extensive review of three decades of this research by Alegre et al. (2018). Pearce and David (1987) achieved two important tasks. First, these specialists emphasized on mission statements as important objects for scientific analysis. They conceptualized the idea of mission statement as a communication that explains the very existence of a given organization and reflects its identity. Second, these authors proposed the "standardized" content of a typical mission statement, which can include several common components, namely target customers and markets, principal products or services, geographic domain (countries and regions interesting to a firm), core technologies, commitment to survival, growth, and profitability, philosophy (including higher priorities – e.g., social or environmental), self-concept (self-understanding or self-positioning), and desired public image. Moreover, Pearce and David (1987) provided their followers with representative examples of how real mission statements can be analyzed in regard to their content. Alegre et al. (2018) demonstrated that several dozens of articles devoted to the mission statement analysis were published in international journals, and the most common topics include procedure of mission declaration (development), mission statement content analyzed by components, importance of mission to firm's staff, and importance of mission to organization

performance. These specialists also showed that this research direction still requires significant conceptual advances.

The previous researchers in mission statements have not focused only on entire economy, but they have also paid attention to particular industries. For instance, Anitsal et al. (2012, 2013) considered retail organizations, Ahmed et al. (2017) dealt with banking, Garg (2014) examined mining sector, Lenkova (2013) studied hydrocarbon industry, and Kemp and Dwyer (2003), Lin and Ryan (2016), Law and Breznik (2018), and Lin et al. (2018) analyzed airlines. The both common ("standard") and specific (i.e., industry-specific) patterns were found in these studies, and the validity of such industry-focused analyses was proven.

The mission statement studies relevant to hospitality are very limited in number, and their critical analysis is provided below. Sufi and Lyons (2003) analyzed the relationship between mission statements and financial performance of 30 hospitality enterprises and found that the annual turnover correlates positively with the successful mission communications. If so, the latter can be managed to increase the organization performance in the hospitality industry. This important study highlighted a way for further research that, unfortunately, was not followed. Moreover, it focused on the performance–mission dependence, which is one of many aspects of the modern mission statements studies (Allegre et al., 2018). The paper by Sufi and Lyons (2003) was published about two decades ago, and the hospitality industry and its strategic thinking have changed significantly since then, especially due to economic perturbations in the late 2000s–early 2010s (Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2011). Forné (2015) stressed the importance of corporations in the hospitality segment of the economy; the study of several Spanish hotels implied that the understanding of their missions by employees and customers generally matches. Presumably, this should contribute to customer satisfaction and, therefore, to better organization performance. Karatepe and Kaviti (2016) addressed chain hotels in Dubai (UAE) and found that mission fulfilment contributes to better

employees–customer relationship via mitigation of the employees' exhaustion. These specialists recommended employees involvement in mission development. Like the previous case, these findings are relevant to organization performance. Finally, Göbel et al. (2017) dealt with hospitality, although not hotels, but food service. They proposed to focus missions on issues relevant to firm sustainability. These works demonstrate that organizations of the hospitality industry deserve analysis of their missions, but such empirical studies are almost lacking. Importantly, the above-mentioned works also stressed the importance of well-written mission statement to high performance of hospitality business. However, the classical analysis of the content of mission statements, i.e., the analysis based on the approach proposed by Pearce and David (1987) and frequently applied to the other industries (see Alegre et al. (2018) and the citations above), is missed in the hospitality studies. In the other words, the four articles devoted to mission statements (Sufi and Lyons, 2003; Forné, 2015; Karatepe and Kaviti, 2016; Göbel et al., 2017) form sufficient premise for categorization of these strategic communications.

International and national hotel chains are key players on the market of accommodation services. Peculiarities of the hotel chain management, including strategy development and implementation, have been analyzed in the literature (Barros and Mascarenhas, 2005; Johnson and Vanetti, 2005; Bohdanowicz et al., 2011; Alon et al., 2012; Ivanov and Ivanova, 2016; Richard and Cleveland, 2016; Hollenbeck, 2017; Deng et al., 2019; Krupskiy et al., 2019). Hotel chains are quite often regarded as corporations (Dunning and McQueen, 1982; Gilbert and Kapur, 1990; Goodman, 2000; Yrigoy, 2016; Morozova et al., 2017). If so, these organizations should have well-defined missions, and their statements are subject to analysis. However, the only works by Sufi and Lyons (2003) and Karatepe and Kaviti (2016) are more or less relevant to such studies. The present paper employs the empirical analysis of mission statements of several hotel chains as hospitality-typical

corporations. It attempts to fill two principal gaps, namely the insufficient mission statement studies in the hospitality industry and the insufficient knowledge on the occurrence of common components in mission statements of specific industries.

Material and method

The material of the present study comprises mission statements of selected hotel chains. In order to collect this material, official web-pages of dozens of organizations have been checked. Chiefly well-known, international hotel chains have been addressed, although national chains have also been considered for collecting as much mission statements, as possible (it has been undertaken to search for all information that can be only found on-line). In the process of material collection, it has been realized that, surprisingly, many hotel chains do not communicate their missions on their web-pages. Presumably, these are either stated in internal, strategy-related corporate documents or not stated at all. On some official web-pages, visions, values, or aims are presented, but these are essentially different strategy elements that cannot be considered for the "pure" analysis of mission statements. A total of seventeen mission statements have been found (Table 1). This sample seems to be limited, but only at the first glance. The argument of Sufi and Lyons (2003), who also faced with a low availability of the material, matters for the present study: the selected hotel chains represent a significant portion of the world hospitality business and include dozens of well-known brands. The hotel chains are treated fully anonymously in this paper to avoid any occasional damage of their reputation, i.e., the chain names are not disclosed, and the organizations are labelled as A–Q.

Table 1: The analyzed hotel chains stating their missions on-line; the basic characteristics are taken chiefly from the official web-pages of the organizations

Organization	Number of properties	Country (headquarters)
A	>700	Singapore

B	>7000	USA
C	>100	Canada
D	>1400	USA
E	>4200	USA
F	~900	USA
G	>600	USA
H	~30	China
I	>6700	USA
J	>1400	USA
K	~280	Sweden
L	>100	China
M	>150	India
N	>9100	USA
O	~30	Russia
P	~20	Russia
Q	~20	Russia

Important methodological templates for the studies of mission statements were provided by Kemp and Dwyer (2003) and Lin et al. (2018) who analyzed strategic communications of airlines. Particularly, these specialists stressed the validity of a cross analysis, which focuses on the distribution of components by statements and the diversity of statements relevant to each common component. The latter approach is sensible when such a diversity really exists (better to say, this is sensible when the sample of statements is big).

As mentioned above, Pearce and David (1987) proposed eight common ("standard") components (categories) of mission statements. David (1989) corrected the nomenclature of these components. Generally, it is possible to distinguish nine common components, namely 1) customers, 2) markets, 3) image, 4) products and/or services, 5) technology, 6) survival, growth, and profitability, 7) philosophy, 8) self-understanding, and 9) employees. Later studies (e.g., O'Gorman and Doran, 1999; Azizi and Makizadeh, 2014; Yadav and Sehgal, 2019) were focused on finding these components in various mission statements and generally confirmed the validity of this nomenclature. In the present paper, the content of each selected mission statement of a hotel chain is analyzed qualitatively to establish presence/absence of these components. This means words, expressions, and phrases from the mission statements

are interpreted qualitatively to find their relation to the noted common components. The only evident interpretations are employed, and all doubtful relations are excluded. Then, the average number of the components in the available statements, as well as the percentage of the components in the entity of mission statements can be calculated. Although the sample size is limited to seventeen statements, it permits making further conclusions about general focus and breadth of the mission statements.

Results

Finding components in the mission statements

The component identification in each selected mission statement is explained below. Representation of each component may differ significantly between the statements, which fact indicates on mission diversity. Some components may overlap in the same phrase. Undoubtedly, the most difficult for the content analysis are the missions formulated as brief slogans.

Hotel chain A: *To inspire and enable the development of staff through the spirit of partnership and the implementation of effective human resource practices.* Four components can be recognized in this statement. Employees are mentioned twice, i.e., as staff and human resource. Inspiration and development of staff and human resource practices can be related tentatively to technologies, as these refer to mechanisms of internal organizational development. Effectiveness of practices refers to organization survival. Finally, the spirit of partnership is evident philosophical foundation of the organization.

Hotel chain B: *Connect the world through the power of hospitality.* This statement is brief, and it contains only two components. The most important of them is philosophy because connection through the power of hospitality is a general, vague, and ambitious appeal referring to solution of a super-task. Mentioning the world can be interpreted as

indication of the organization orientation to the global market, if even the word "world" is evidently used for strengthening the philosophical appeal.

Hotel chain C: *We have chosen to specialize within the hospitality industry by offering only experiences of exceptional quality. Our objective is to be recognized as the company that manages the finest hotels, resorts and residence clubs wherever we locate. We create properties of enduring value using superior design and finishes, and support them with a deeply instilled ethic of personal service. Doing so allows [organization name] to satisfy the needs and tastes of our discriminating customers, and to maintain our position as the world's premier luxury hospitality company.* This statement is lengthy, and its scope is rather comprehensive. It considers customers (direct consideration), markets (global market of luxury accommodation services), image (the organization intends to be recognized positively), services (direct consideration), technology (types of accommodation facilities and design), philosophy (luxury, value, ethic, personal touch, and tastes of guests), and self-understanding (the statement starts with "we", and then it refers to the organization several times). Consideration of market positioning and specialization can be related to the organization's competitive advantages and, more generally, to survival and growth. Apparently, this mission statement lacks the only component of employees.

Hotel chain D: *Our mission is to build on the iconic heritage of our brands – [brand name] – to become the universally recognized leader in economy lodging. We operate our business with the drive and creativity of an entrepreneur, guided by a heart that's dedicated to hospitality and service. We continuously strive to reinvent the economy lodging category while remaining 100 percent committed to delivering a great experience to our guests, team members, franchisees and partners.* Several components of this statement are well-visible. The focus on the brands' power reflects self-understanding. The other components are survival (intension to lead), image (being not a simple leader, but recognized leader),

technologies (brands and franchising scheme), customers (considered directly), services (lodging), philosophy (entrepreneurship style, heart guidance, industry dedication, and economy reinvention), and employees (team members). Although the market is not indicated directly, it is possible to interpret the intension to universal recognition as a sign of global market orientation. Generally, this is example of a statement that considers all common components.

Hotel chain E: *To be the most hospitable company in the world – by creating heartfelt experiences for Guests, meaningful opportunities for Team Members, high value for Owners and a positive impact in our Communities.* Philosophy is the main component of this statement, as the higher purposes of the organization are stated several times. Customers and employees are also considered. High value for owners means profitability. Intention to lead globally indicates on the world market. Finally, the organization itself is emphasized, and, thus, self-understanding also exists in this statement.

Hotel chain F: *To deliver distinctive experiences for our guests.* This statement is very short, but three components can be recognized. These are customers (guests), philosophy (providing guests with not just a service, but experience), and survival (provision with distinctive experience is relevant to competitive advantage).

Hotel chain G: *Creating a rewarding work experience for all of our associates, providing exceptional guest service and generating superior returns.* In this statement, several components can be identified, namely customers (guests), image (generation of returns), services (considered directly), philosophy (rewarding work and exceptional service), and employees (associates).

Hotel chain H: *Our mission is to completely delight and satisfy our guests. We are committed to continual improvement, to making a difference every day and to being the best.* This statement is quite complex. Philosophy takes the first place (guests delighting, continual

improvement, and difference making). Being the best and guest satisfaction are evidence of image and customer concern, respectively. Improvement and difference making mean growth. Self-understanding can be also established by emphasis on "our" and "we". Although service-related issues (delight and satisfaction of guests) are considered, services themselves are neither explained, nor even named. Therefore, the service component does not exist.

Hotel chain I: *To enhance the lives of our customers by creating and enabling unsurpassed vacation and leisure experience.* This is example of a simple, two-component statement. The organization's influence on the life and the experience of the people represents a far-going philosophy. Additionally, customers are considered directly.

Hotel chain J: *[organization name] is an innovative hotel company doing business as [organization name] and focuses on the franchising, management and ownership of upscale, midscale and economy hotels. The company focuses on maximizing return on invested capital for hotel owners across North America through relevant brands, industry-leading technology and forward-thinking services.* This statement emphasizes on self-understanding via multiple explanations of what is this company and which are its intensions. Technology (directions of hotel management and general principles of work), profitability (investment return), and market (North America) are indicated clearly. Notably and generally atypically to the other hotel chains, philosophy and customers are not mentioned. In regard to these observations, one can judge this statement as corporation-focused.

Hotel chain K: *Our mission is to create great hotel experiences for the many people.* Interpreting this statement is a kind of challenge. Hotel experience is mentioned generally, and this cannot be treated as accommodation service. People (potential guests) are mentioned, but these are not defined as customers. Establishing the only philosophy component in this declaration of the company essence seems to be the only plausible solution.

Hotel chain L: *To delight our guests every time by creating engaging experiences straight from our heart.* Two components can be found in this statement. These are philosophy (guest delighting, engaging experience, "from-the-heart" work, and very general formulation of the entire mission) and customers (guests).

Hotel chain M: *To improve the quality of life of the communities it serves globally.* Undoubtedly, this statement is too ambitious, planetary-scale appeal, which points out dominance of philosophy. Additionally, global serving can be understood as indication on the global market.

Hotel chain N: *Our mission is to make hotel travel possible for all people. Wherever they go, [organization name] will be there to welcome them. Our owners play a critical role by putting this mission to work in real time, in hotels all over the world.* Three components are visible in this statement. As in many previous cases, philosophy evidenced by the general phrasing and the higher purposes (like making travel possible for all) dominates. Mission implementation by the owners is relevant to the organization survival. Global ambitions of the chain are shown, and these are relevant to the market. Service is also stated, although indirectly. On the one hand, it is shown that the organization provides accommodation in hotels. On the other hand, welcoming guests is the essence of hospitality.

Hotel chain O: *We intend to make so that our guests can have comfortable accommodation and quality service by suitable price on vacations, travels, and business trips in Russia and outside [translated from Russian].* In this statement, service is the dominant component because accommodation and price–quality relation are emphasized. Vacations, travels, and business trips associate to the essence of the services provided by the organization. Customers (considered directly) and markets (Russia and outside is a too vague market characteristic) are also indicated. Quality service refers to image.

Hotel chain P: *Company mission is following the best hospitality traditions via professional approach to accommodation facilities management* [translated from Russian]. The entire statement explains how the organization views itself, i.e., this is self-understanding. Traditions and professionalism reflect a kind of philosophy, although too business-related. Consideration of accommodation facilities refers to the essence of service.

Hotel chain Q: *The mission of [organization name] is to make happier the people staying far from their home* [translated from Russian]. This is another example of single-component statements. The mission is formulated in too general words and reflects nothing other than philosophy. In this case, the people cannot be understood as customers because their relevance to the specific organization activity is not shown clearly (staying far from home does not necessarily mean hotel accommodation).

Summarizing component distribution in the mission statements

The content of the mission statements of the selected hotel chains is summarized in Table 2. Some differences between the statements are evident. The first difference is linked to comprehensiveness. The number of components in each statement ranges from 1 (two cases) to 9 (one case). The average number is 3.9, the median value is 4, and the mode is 2. Mission statements with ≤ 5 components dominate. Generally, this means that the mission statements of the selected hotel chains are rather brief and their content is of moderate diversity.

Table 2: Components of the analyzed mission statements

Organization	Number of common components	Common components*								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	4					+	+	+		+
B	2		+					+		
C	8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	
D	9	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
E	6	+	+				+	+	+	+
F	3	+					+	+		
G	5	+		+	+			+		+
H	5	+		+			+	+	+	

I	2		+				+
J	4			+		+	+
K	1						+
L	2		+				+
M	2			+			+
N	5			+	+		+
O	4		+	+	+	+	
P	3					+	+
Q	1						+

* Common components: 1 – customers, 2 – markets, 3 – image, 4 – products and/or services, 5 – technology, 6 – survival, growth, and profitability, 7 – philosophy, 8 – self-understanding, 9 – employees.

Apparently, the statements tend to focus on a limited number of issues. In order to realize this fact, the percentage of components is calculated (Table 3). The majority of the statements bear the philosophy component. Customers, markets, and survival, growth, and profitability are also considered frequently. The rarest components are image, technology, and employees. It should be noted that none component occurs in less than four cases. On the one hand, the mission statements of the analyzed hotel chains tend to be philosophical, and, on the other hand, they are often (but not always) customer-oriented. However, one should note that customers are indicated too generally, i.e., without specification of the target audience. In contrast, philosophy is often explained in detail.

Table 3: Distribution of the common components (after Pearce and David, 1987; David, 1989) in the mission statements of the hotel chains

Component	Number of statements	Relative number of statements, %%
Customers	9	52.9
Markets	8	47.1
Image	5	29.4
Products and/or services	6	35.3
Technology	4	23.5
Survival, growth, and profitability	8	47.1
Philosophy	15	88.2
Self-understanding	6	35.3
Employees	4	23.5

The representation of the common components differs. Some components like customers, services, and employees are represented similarly in the missions, even with the similar words. However, three components deserve special attention because of their diversity. The first of them is philosophy. This component is often represented by three themes, namely changing the life of the people, providing with exceptional opportunities to travellers, and establishing the higher principles for business itself. The second component that contributes to the mission diversity is market. When the relevant intensions of hotel chains are stated, these address to the world, regional (e.g., North American), or national (e.g., Russian) markets. Global ambitions are most common, which is expected in regard to the international operation of many considered chains. The third notable component is survival, growth, and profitability. Its main themes include successful performance, development approach (e.g., through leadership, positioning, or human resource management), and owners involvement. Generally, the missions reflect well some specific features of the hotel business, including traveller accommodation and international operation, and the statements are often written so to demonstrate responsibility for guests.

Discussion

General interpretation

As suggested by the results, the hotel chains tend to focus on the relevance of their activity to solution of some super-tasks (philosophy component – Table 3). These can be either traveler-specific or society-scale tasks. In the latter case, the hospitality organizations fit requirements of the modern strategic management where significant emphasis is made on social responsibility (Hermel, 2008; Hamel, 2009; Filho et al., 2010; Stiglbauer, 2011; Blinova et al., 2018; Greige Frangieh and Khayr Yaacoub, 2019). As for the customers, these are considered frequently, but only in comparison to some other, underrepresented

components. The results can be interpreted so that customers, consideration of which is so urgent in the hotel business (Barsky, 1992; Kandampully and Suhartanto, 2000; Prasad and Dev, 2000; Artemenko et al., 2019; Lockwood and Pyun, 2020; Park et al., 2020), are addressed with less attention than they really deserve.

Rare attention to image, technology, and employees can be interpreted hypothetically as a kind of self-reliance, conservatism, and staff stratification, respectively. Of special interest is staff stratification – a phenomenon that can be described in the words of organizational space management (Weinfurtner and Seidl, 2019), i.e., as a possibly big distance between top managers responsible for mission formulation ("big thinkers") and ordinary workers (maids, bellmen, technical staff, etc.). If this distance is too big, top managers may "ignore" other employees. This strongly contrasts to so frequent aiming of the analyzed missions on social comfort and benefits to all people. In fact, the outstanding importance of employees for hotel performance is undisputable (e.g., Ažic, 2017; Grønholdt and Martensen, 2019; Predvoditeleva et al., 2019; Johnson, 2020; Radojevic et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020), although the real appreciation of the staff may face serious challenges (Kichuk et al., 2019; Qu et al., 2020). Further investigations are required in order to understand whether such a dichotomy reflects a biased vision of the mission writers or "double standards" in the modern hospitality industry.

It is very important to realize that none of the analyzed statements deals with environmental concerns, although the latter are highly important to modern organizations, including those of the hospitality industry (Lawler and Worley, 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Fernández-Robin et al., 2019; Chan et al., 2020; Han et al., 2020). Making the world and national economies "green" and circular is of utmost importance (Bina, 2013; Lorek and Spangenberg, 2014; Ghisellini et al., 2016; Kirchherr et al., 2017; Loiseau et al., 2016; Stahel, 2016; Ávila-Gutiérrez et al., 2019; Busu and Trica, 2019; Potravny et al., 2019;

Ghisellini and Ulgiati, 2020; Kasseeah, 2020), and it is alarming that the considered hotel chains do not put this "greening" into their mission statements as a top priority.

Comparison to previous studies

The results of the present analysis can be compared to the outcomes of some previous studies. First of all, the original findings of Pearce and David (1987) are worth to consider. Their study of the top American companies showed that the most common components of mission statements are survival, growth, and profitability (90%), image (87%), and philosophy (79%), whereas the least common component is technology (20%). This coincides with what has been established for hotel chains only partly (Table 3). The philosophy component is also very common in the mission statements of hotel chains. Survival, growth, and profitability are found in just about a half of the statements, and image is among the least common components. The study by Lin et al. (2018) dealt with airline companies, and it was found that these organizations tend to emphasize on products/services, customers, and markets in their mission statements. For the missions of the selected hotel chains, customers and markets are important, but less than philosophy, and services are not considered frequently (Table 3). This means certain difference from what was reported for the airlines.

This comparison indicates on the specifics of the mission statements of the hotel chains, which pay less attention to many "standard" corporate priorities. Most probably, this should be explained by the relative brevity of many statements (Table 2) and their over-emphasis on guest satisfaction. Earlier, Forné (2015) and Karatepe and Kaviti (2016) considered mission statements in regard to their meaning to customers and employees, with corresponds partly to the noted over-emphasis. Göbel et al. (2017) suggested that the food-related hospitality organizations should turn attention to the issues of firm sustainability, and

the same shift in the focus seems to be necessary to the hotel chains with regard to the mission statements of many of them. About two decades ago, Sufi and Lyons (2003) stressed the necessity of improvement of the hotel mission statements in order to increase the organization performance. Apparently, the present state of the strategic declarations of many hotel chains bears signs of underdevelopment, and the desired improvement remains urgent task.

Conclusions

This pioneering investigation of the corporate mission statements in the hospitality industry permits outlining their specific features. The mission statements of the considered hotel chains demonstrate moderate diversity of their content. The number of the "standard" components differs between the missions, with the average number of 3.9. Totally, all components are considered, but philosophy is the most common of them. This means that the strategic thinking in the hotel chains is biased, with significant attention to super-tasks (too general, world-scale priorities) and less attention to customers, markets, employees, and many other important issues. It is questionable whether implementation of such missions may be helpful to encourage the staff or to provide clear information to potential partners. Nonetheless, there are also good examples of the statements that include many and even all common components.

The mission statements of the hotel chains differ from those of the other corporations. Particularly, the analyzed statements lack emphasis on such highly-important issues as environment and employees, which requires further improvement in regard to the importance of personnel skills and ecologization ("greening") to hotel performance. Without this improvement, many missions do not contribute adequately to the organizations' reputation. Customers, employees, environment are central ideas in the contemporary hotel business, and

undervaluation or ignorance of these in important strategic statements can disappoint workers, partners, and investors. This situation is also dangerous for the whole governance of hotel corporations because mission statements are important documents to managers themselves and serve as "reminders" of the strategic priorities. Moreover, the entire world hotel industry needs good reputation to achieve sustainable development, which requires strategic thinking fixed similarly to the other industries. The need of good mission statements is especially urgent because of sensitivity of the world hotel industry to various economical, geopolitical, and other perturbations. More comprehensive and well-balanced sets of strategic priorities communicated through mission statements fix frameworks for strategic decision-making that are essential to adequate responses of the hotel chains to such perturbations.

The present study faces two limitations. The first of them is the size of the sample, as only 17 mission statements are considered. Although this sample is representative because it reflects mission statement availability on official organization web-pages and deals with some biggest hotel chains with a lot of brands (cf. Sufi and Lyons, 2003), a bigger number of strategic communications is necessary to take into account in the future. The central problem is finding them, as some (if not many) of these are not disclosed. At least, it is important to realize how many hotel chains have defined their missions, either in open or closed mode. If statements are available for a few hotel chains, this means hospitality organizations tend to follow the learning strategy (in terms of Steensen, 2014). If many hotel chains have mission statements, but do not communicate these on-line, this resembles the hidden strategy (in terms of Steensen, 2014). To overcome the noted problem and to check the strength of this limitation, further investigations may involve direct requests of mission statements from hotel chain administrations. The second limitation is linked to putting the findings into the broad context. As research in strategic management in the hospitality industry is somewhat specific, and it often encounters a lack of theoretical developments (Harrington et al., 2014; Okumus

et al., 2017; Köseoglu et al., 2019), it is challenging to relate the results of the present study to some major trends in the corporate development in this industry. This means that the results of investigations focused on the strategic communications and the other related issues are chiefly of empirical importance.

Nonetheless, the outcomes of the present study permit giving three practical recommendations. First, the mission statements of the hotel chains should become more comprehensive. This means that top managers should pay attention to all nine common components outlined by Pearce and David (1987) and David (1989). Such chains as C and D provide excellent examples how a well-developed, all-embracing mission statement should look like in the hospitality industry. Such statements are necessary to improve the performance of these organizations, as the role of the well-defined missions in this industry was demonstrated by Sufi and Lyons (2003), Forné (2015), and Karatepe and Kaviti (2016). Second, top managers responsible for mission development should care more about the adequate reflection of organization image, technologies, and employees, as well as environmental philosophy. All of these are of crucial importance for successful performance of hotels and guest attraction (e.g., see on image – Kandampully and Hu, 2007; Cheng and Rashid, 2015; Krisnawati et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2019; El-Said, 2020). Third, it appears that the corporations from many other industries (Pearce and David, 1987; Anitsal et al., 2012, 2013; Lin et al., 2018) provide with suitable examples of successful mission statements, and managers of the hotel chains should, at least, take these examples into consideration. Additionally, governmental initiatives realized in some countries can be helpful. For instance, the national projects of Russia (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2019, Nosachevskiy et al., 2019) can influence on how particular industries express their strategic thinking (this approach is especially valuable, as a special, tourism-dedicated project is under discussion in this country).

Improving corporate mission is a difficult task, and mission statement is not a set of obvious phrases, but it is a well-thought formulation of strategic priorities. In some cases, correction of the entire strategy of the given hotel chain may be required. However, more or less comprehensive strategies concerning customers, employees, environment, etc. are developed by many hotels chains, and, thus, the only re-formulation of the mission statements is required in these cases.

Generally, the present study proves the necessity of the mission statement analysis in the world hospitality industry. Further empirical investigations should be devoted to the different categories of collective accommodation facilities, restaurants, and other related firms. Application of some advanced analytical tools (e.g., Babnik et al., 2014) to mission statements in the hospitality industry is also possible, as well as justification of these tools to the industry-specific communications.

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