



## Persuasive Strategies in Mission Statements

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Recibido: 14 de noviembre de 2019 / Aceptado: 24 de noviembre de 2019

**Abstract.** A mission statement is a brief description of a company's core purpose that conveys the corporate identity and values. Mission statements constitute a genre within the category of promotional literature (Bhatia, 2005) which has been the subject of much research in the last decades (e.g. Swales & Rogers, 1995; Leuthesswer & Kohli, 1997; Stallworth, 2008; Mason & Mason, 2012). Drawing on Swales' (1990) and Bhatia's (2014) genre theories and Aristotle's rhetoric model (included in Rapp, 2011), the present paper examines a corpus of mission statements with a view to showing how they are constructed to influence the targeted audience's opinions. We analyze their move structure and the elements of logos, ethos and pathos – the three Aristotelian modes of argumentation – which play a vital role in building or maintaining customer loyalty

**Keywords:** mission statement; genre; move structure; argumentation; persuasion.

### [es] Estrategias persuasivas en declaraciones de misión

**Resumen.** Una declaración de misión es una breve descripción del objetivo fundamental de una empresa que refleja su identidad y sus valores. Las declaraciones de misión constituyen un género perteneciente a la literatura promocional (Bhatia, 2005), objeto de numerosos estudios en las últimas décadas (véase Swales y Rogers, 1995; Leuthesswer y Kohli, 1997; Stallworth, 2008; Mason y Mason, 2012). Basándose en las teorías de género de Swales (1990) y Bhatia's (2014) y en la retórica de Aristóteles (2011), este artículo analiza un corpus de declaraciones de misión con el fin de mostrar cómo se elaboran para influir en las opiniones del público. Se analizan su organización en movimientos y los elementos del logos, el ethos y el pathos – los tres tipos de argumentación aristotélicas – que contribuyen a construir o mantener la fidelidad del cliente.

**Palabras clave:** declaración de misión; género; organización en movimientos; argumentación; persuasión.

**Contents.** Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. Analysis. 3.1. Structure of Mission Statements. 3.2. Persuasion in Mission Statements. 3.2.1. Logos. 3.2.2. Ethos. 3.2.3. Pathos. 4. Conclusion. References.

**How to cite:** Negro, I. (2019). Persuasive Strategies in Mission Statements. In: Fernández-Ulloa, T. (ed.) *The Rhetoric of Persuasion. Talking to Our Emotions. Círculo de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación 80*, pp. 37-50, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/CLAC.66599>.

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## 1. Introduction

A mission statement is the declaration of an organization's reason for being. It thus defines the fundamental purpose that differentiates a business from other businesses of its type and identifies its products or services, markets, customers and philosophy. In line with this, a mission statement is widely considered to be the first step in business planning, inasmuch as it is key to setting objectives, formulating strategies and plans, devising policies, allocating resources, assigning tasks and motivating employees.

Although some scholarly attention has been paid to the mission statements of educational institutions (e.g. Morphew and Hartley, 2016), the bulk of research has focused on business organizations (e.g. Peyrefitte and David, 2006; David et al., 2014), mostly American and Canadian firms (e.g. Baetz and Bart, 1996). Bhatia includes business mission statements within the category of promotional literature (2014: 59), together with sales promotion letters, advertisements, company brochures, job applications, book blurbs, book reviews, sales letters and travel brochures (2005: 17). They constitute a genre as defined by Swales (1990: 58), a class of communicative events which serve a communicative purpose.

Business mission statements have been investigated from a discourse analysis approach that looks at their linguistic and textual features. Some studies have explored the role of mission statements in projecting corporate image and culture (e.g. Swales and Rogers 1995; Stallworth, 2008), whereas others have discussed the relationship between mission statements and company performance (e.g. Bartkus et al., 2006; Bart et al., 2001). These studies are staff-oriented. In contrast, customer-centric investigations (e.g. David et al., 2014; Amato and Amato, 2002) have explored the way in which mission statements are written to build customer loyalty. Following David et al. (2014), mission statements are written in a way to attract and retain customers, to foster customer satisfaction and to create an emotional bond with others, rather than merely being used in strategic planning and motivating staff. The present paper lies within the scope of mission statement research from a customer-focused perspective, as opposed to the manager-/employee-focused perspective adopted in the bulk of mission statement literature.

From a linguistic perspective, mission statements are regarded as a form of organizational communication that makes use of rhetorical and discourse strategies (Cheney et al., 2004, 2010; Higgins & Walker, 2012). Organizational discourse relies on Aristotle's rhetorical model (2011), based on the interaction between the writer, the audience and the message through the interplay of *ethos* (appeals to credibility/authority), *pathos* (emotional appeals to the audience) and *logos* (appeals to reason) in discourse to influence others (Aristotle's rhetoric has also provided the basis for the analysis of political metaphor, Charteris-Black, 2009; Negro, 2015). Following this approach, it is our claim that mission statements constitute a persuasive genre and that their persuasive intent is achieved through the interplay of logical, ethical and emotional appeals.

## 2. Methodology

Our research is based on a qualitative study of mission statements. We collected and analysed 25 mission statements drawn from the websites of 25 companies randomly selected from the list of 2017 Fortune 500 company. The companies selected are the following: Microsoft, McDonald's, Toyota, Disney, Gucci, Nike, Walmart, General Motors, IBM, Dell, Coca Cola, Hewlett, Mercedes-Benz, Adidas, Starbucks, Gillette, Amazon, Levi-Strauss, IKEA, Santander, Iberdrola, Repsol, Mapfre, Telefónica, Cepsa. The mission statements come under the labels *About Us*, *About the company/the group/us*, *Our/The Company*, and range between 11 (Nike's) and 454 words (Coca Cola Company).

## 3. Analysis

### 3.1. Structure of Mission Statements

The aim of mission statements is to be clear, concise and specific, as shown in (1-4):

- (1) It is our mission to be the best sports brand in the world. (Adidas)
- (2) We look for energy solutions that meet people's needs and safeguard their well-being. (Repsol)
- (3) General Motors is a global automotive company united by a single purpose: To earn customers for life.
- (4) We want to redefine banking to cover all client needs in different markets through common platforms that are efficient and flexible. (Santander)

As we see in (1-4), mission statements display variety in content. For instance, (1) announces Adidas's purpose, (2) and (3) identify the company business, and (4) specifies the business tools.

Drawing on Swales' (1990) model for article introductions, we postulate a generic structure of mission statements in terms of rhetorical moves through which the communicative purpose of mission statements is achieved. Each move also serves a typical communicative intention which is dependent on the communicative intention of the overall message.

In general, the mission statements in our sample are organized into the following moves and submoves:

1. Asserting the company's mission
2. Indicating the company's vision (long-term goal)
3. Establishing the company identity
  - a) Identifying who they are (company business, geographical domain)
  - b) Specifying what they do (products/services, target customers and markets)
  - c) Outlining how they do it (level of service, behavioural standards, guiding principles, values). Showing concern for social responsibility (responsibility to the society in which the company does business) and expressing commitment to sustainability are typical of this submove.

Below we provide two examples of this three-move structure of mission statements taken from Walmart and Iberdrola.

MOVE 1: Asserting the company's mission.

*[...] united by a single purpose: To earn customers for life. Earning customers for life is the foundational promise of General Motors. It is a commitment to treat every customer with respect.* (General Motors).

*Our mission is to create value sustainably.* (Iberdrola)

MOVE 2: Indicating the company's vision.

*We want to create a better future for people with the support of our human team.* (Iberdrola)

MOVE 3: Establishing the company identity.

Submove 3.1. Identifying who they are.

*GENERAL Motors is a global automotive company.*

*[...] the leading multinational group in the energy sector.* (Iberdrola)

Submove 3.2. Specifying what they do.

*Appreciating customers inspires us to make better, safer, higher value cars, trucks and crossovers.* (General Motors)

Submove 3.3. Outlining how they do it.

*Quality and safety are part of our very foundation. Safety is something we will never compromise.* (General Motors)

*providing a quality service for society, citizens, customers, employees, shareholders, and other stakeholders [...] through the use of environmentally-friendly energy sources, which engages in innovation, leads the process of digital transformation in its area of activity, and is committed to the fight against climate change through all of its business activities, with a social dividend and the generation of employment and wealth, considering its employees to be a strategic asset. Along these lines, we foster their development, training, and measures of reconciliation, favouring a good working environment and equal opportunity. All of the foregoing is within the framework of our strategy of social responsibility and compliance with tax rules.* (Iberdrola)

It must be pointed out that it is unusual to find all the moves in the same mission statement and in the same order. As a matter of fact, we encountered three mission statements where moves 2 and 3 are skipped (IBM, Nike and Gillette). The mission statement issued by Disney does not communicate the company values.

Mission statements generally open with the declaration of the company's purpose, although we found 5 instances (Toyota, Walmart, Adidas, Starbucks, Mapfre, IKEA and Telefónica) where it is positioned after establishing the company identity or outlining the vision.

Another important move in the rhetoric of mission statements is indicating the company vision, although it is not an obligatory section. In our sample it is included in six mission statements (Microsoft, Hewlett, Iberdrola, Repsol, Cepsa and Toyota).

Outlining the corporate culture, philosophy or values is usually assigned the ending position. The focus of the last move is to give legitimacy to business

practices by claiming that they are not exclusively driven by profit-making, but are also motivated by values such as sustainability, social responsibility and environmental awareness.

Three mission statements in our sample do not conform to this three-move structure. For example, the mission statement of Mercedes Benz is developed as a set of goals:

(5) To delight our customers in everything we are doing.

To continually improve the effectiveness of our Quality Management System and our business processes.

To continually improve the quality of our products and services.

To have a team-oriented and open-minded corporate culture involving employees through leadership and individual acceptance of delegated responsibility

To be aware of our environment.

To have a professional relationship with our business partners.

While the first goal can be interpreted as the company's mission, the others bear upon various aspects: internal stakeholders (staff, partners), external (customers) stakeholders, company values and concern for the environment.

On the linguistic plane, mission statements share several lexico-grammatical features:

a) Most sentences are in the form of statements.

b) The sentences are highly nominal.

c) The verbs are in the simple present, with occasional simple past forms and imperatives.

Having examined the structural organization of mission statements, we proceed to the analysis of their persuasive function.

### 3. 2. Persuasion in Mission Statements

As shown in Table 1, the persuasive function of mission statements is accomplished through a range of strategies pertaining to the three modes of argumentation proposed in Aristotle's rhetoric: *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*.

| Rhetorical dimension | Persuasion strategies  |
|----------------------|--|
| Logos                | Factual information<br>Direct appeals to customers<br>Tapping into people's needs<br>Positive self-characterization of the company<br>Asserting the company's competitive advantage<br>Claiming fundamental corporate values |
| Ethos                | Assuming the company's reliability<br>Describing the company's mission in terms of commitment<br>Claiming the company's well-established reputation<br>Using expert sources<br>Establishing common ground with the audience  |
| Pathos               | Focus on the customer  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Showing concern about the customers' well-being<br>Showing feelings of sympathy for customers<br>Self-characterization as a provider of unique experiences<br>Appeal to universal desires<br>Promise of greater achievements<br>Use of figurative language (hyperbole, metaphor, metonymy) |
|--|--|

Table 1. Persuasion strategies in mission statements.

### 3.2.1. Logos

Logos is concerned with the organization of the message in order to offer a favorable description of the company. This positive description can include one or more of the following elements:

#### 1) Factual Information about the Company

The first section of some mission statements in our sample includes the initial narrative of the firm's history, presented as the successful development from a small business into a global company:

(5) Walmart, which started small, with a single discount store and the simple idea of selling more for less, has grown over the last 50 years into the largest retailer in the world.

Here is another example from Tesla, where the concern about indicating the brand extension is taken as the main source of persuasion:

(6) Tesla was founded in 2003 by a group of engineers who wanted to prove that people didn't need to compromise to drive electric [...]. Today, Tesla builds not only all-electric vehicles but also [...] clean energy generation and storage products.

The use of statistics revealing the company's size and performance is a powerful persuasive strategy:

(7) Employing more than 60,000 people in over 160 countries, we produce more than 850 million product units every year and generate sales of € 19 billion (Adidas).

(8) Each week, over 260 million customers and members visit our 11,695 stores under 59 banners in 28 countries and e-commerce websites in 11 countries. With fiscal year 2017 revenue of \$485.9 billion, Walmart employs approximately 2.3 million associates worldwide.

#### 2) Reference to Customers

In other cases, the logical appeal is not achieved by providing factual information about the firm, but through reference to customers. Some mission statements make direct appeals to customers:

(9) You're reinventing how you work. How you play. How you live. With our technology, you'll reinvent your world. (Hewlett)

In other mission statements the customers' needs tapped into. Here is an example from IKEA's mission statement:

(10) And we work to get better insight into what the many people need in order to improve their life at home.

(11) We are a global, integrated company that is always looking for new energy solutions to meet society's needs. (Repsol)

### 3) Positive Self-Characterization of the Company

In the mission statements analyzed the companies are reported to have a set of positively evaluated characteristics:

a) Forward-looking attitude:

(12) We're always looking ahead. (Levi-Strauss)

(13) Stay ahead. (IKEA)

b) Ability to meet the customers' expectations and even exceed them:

(14) Dell empowers countries, communities, customers and people everywhere to use technology to realize their dreams.

(15) [...] initiatives we're running [...] to solve the impossible. (Microsoft)

(16) Bold: going one step further than what you expect from us. (Telefónica)

c) Ability to fulfil future needs:

(17) [...] to equip young people for the technology-driven world of tomorrow [...] We'll be at the centre of tomorrow's transformations. (Microsoft)

(18) Together we work to stay in the forefront of [...] changes in retailing. (IKEA)

(19) [Iberdrola] leads the process of digital transformation.

d) Potential to achieve high-end goals:

(20) [...] we can change the world for the better. (Microsoft)

(21) We remain dedicated to leading the world into a more prosperous future; to creating a world that is fairer, more diverse, more tolerant, more just. (IBM)

(22) [...] to create a better everyday life for the many people. (IKEA)

(23) We want to make sure our company is encouraging a healthy world and a better future. (Levi Strauss)

e) Ability to make greater achievements:

(24) We'll stop making razor blades when we can't keep making them better. (Gillette)

(25) [...] innovations pioneered by Amazon, and we're always looking for the next one.

### 4) Asserting the Company's Competitive Advantage

Indicating the attribute that allows a company to outperform its rivals highlights its potential superiority and thus serves to attract customers:

(26) [...] we're here to make a difference, and here's how. (McDonald's)

(27) From the beginning, Starbucks set out to be a different kind of company. One that not only celebrated coffee and the rich tradition, but that also brought a feeling of connection.

### **5) Claiming Fundamental Corporate Values**

Company culture relies on values that represent the central values in corporate discourse and convey a positive evaluation (Swales & Rogers, 1995): innovation, excellence, integrity, performance, trust, teamwork, responsibility, competitiveness, transparency, professionalism and fairness. We find a predominant reference to innovation (14 instances), followed by sustainability (8 instances). The idea of innovation is conveyed through words and phrases such as "pioneering and innovative spirit", "pioneers", "fearless exploration", "creativity", "continuous improvement". Some illustrations of this strategy are found in (28-33):

(28) To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete\* in the world. (Nike)

(29) Walmart continues to be a leader in sustainability.

(30) and we work to build sustainability into everything we do. (Levi-Strauss)

(31) [...] undertake open and fair business activities. (Toyota)

(32) We make sure everything we do is through the lens of humanity (Starbucks)

(33) We care deeply about doing the right thing. (Levi-Strauss)

### **6) Integrating the Elements that Establish the Company's Identity**

In most of the mission statements selected, the main components, namely mission, vision and values seem to be loosely connected. They are presented under different sections and the relationship between them is not made explicit. However, in the mission statements of Toyota and Coca-Cola, mission, vision and values are integrated into a coherent whole, so that the mission is framed by the vision and feeds into the values:

(34) Toyota has been using its Guiding Principles to produce reliable vehicles and sustainable development of society.

While in Toyota's mission statement the link between mission, vision and values is shown by means of a tree diagram, in the mission statement developed by Coca-Cola's journey metaphor integrates the three elements. This reinforces the argumentation and therefore increases its persuasive potential:

(35) [The vision] provides us with a "Roadmap" [...] Our Roadmap starts with our mission. Our values serve as a compass for our actions.

#### **3.2.2. Ethos**

As advanced above, the persuasive intent of mission statements is frequently grounded on the ethical dimension of discourse. Ethos is based on the writer's credibility or reliability. Customers must perceive the company as credible or reliable to show loyalty. There are several aspects to building the company's credibility:



### 1) Assuming the Company is Trustworthy

(36) Customers trust us to deliver technology solutions. (Dell)

(37) Lying at the heart of our business are the 30 million-plus customers who place their trust in us. (Mapfre)

(38) Trusted: we have the best network, allowing us to offer you the security and trustworthiness you expect from us. (Telefónica)

### 2) Describing the Firm's Mission in Terms of Commitment

(39) It is a commitment to treat every customer with respect. (General Motors)

(40) [...] remain committed to serving consumer groups who are constantly looking for more options to express their individuality. (Adidas)

### 3) Making a Claim about its Well-Established Reputation

Many mission statements seek to impress upon (potential) customers that the company has a well-established reputation in the market by highlighting various features:

(i) its large customer base:

(41) Round the world there are millions of sellers, authors and developers using Amazon products and services.

(42) Lying at the heart of our business are the 30 million-plus customers [...] (Mapfre)

(ii) its long experience:

(43) No other brand has a more distinguished history [...] than Adidas.

(44) We have clothed generations of individuals, leaders, thinkers and doers. (Levi-Strauss)

(iii) its wide product portfolio:

(45) To underlie our credibility as the multi-sport specialist [...], there is hardly any category that we don't produce products for. (Adidas)

(iv) its achievements:

(46) We established the first code of conduct for apparel manufacturers. (Levi-Strauss)

(47) We've been at the centre of the revolutionary changes that technology has brought to every aspect of our lives. (Microsoft)

### 4) Using Expert Sources

Several mission statements are issued by the company's CEO to back up the firm's credibility, as exemplified by Santander and IBM:

(48) We remain dedicated to leading the world into a more prosperous and progressive future. (IBM)

### 3.2.3. Pathos

Of the three channels of persuasion in Aristotle's rhetoric, pathos is probably the most critical one, although it is the most effective. Pathos appeals to an audience's needs, values, and emotional sensibilities.

Writers of mission statements attempt to create an emotional bond with customers using different strategies:

#### 1) Customer Focus

Some mission statements state that it is the company's purpose to build customer loyalty:

(54) General Motors is a global automotive company united by a single purpose: To earn customers for life.

#### 2) Concern about Customers' Well-Being:

Claiming that its main concern is the customers' well-being helps the company to be successful in its persuasive effort:

(55) [...] to create technology that makes life better for everyone, everywhere. (Hewlett)

(56) To delight our customers in everything we are doing. (Mercedes-Benz)

(57) energy solutions that [...] safeguard their [people's] well-being. (Repsol)

#### 3) Showing Feelings of Sympathy for Customers

(58) Appreciating customers [...] inspires us to make better, safer, higher value cars, trucks and crossovers. (General Motors)

(59) Our main hallmark [...] as an insurance company is that we are people who take care of people. (Mapfre)

#### 4) Self-Characterization as Providers of Unique Experiences

Companies such as Starbucks, Adidas and Hewlett portray themselves not just as product/service suppliers, but as the providers of a unique experience:

(60) We're not just passionate purveyors of coffee, but everything else that goes with a full and rewarding coffeehouse experience. (Starbucks)

(61) letting them [teenage consumers] enjoy experiences that only NEO [an Adidas label] can provide.

(62) To engineer experiences that amaze. (Hewlett)

#### 5) Appeal to Universal Desires

Other companies like Coca-Cola seek to win customers by promising to fulfil universal human desires such as the desire for happiness or self-fulfillment:

(63) To inspire moments of optimism and happiness. (Coca-Cola)

(64) We help them [athletes] to achieve their peak performance by making them faster, stronger, smarter and cooler. (Adidas)

## 6) Aligning the Company's Goals with the Satisfaction of the Customers' Needs

(65) If it's good for you, it's good for us. (Telefónica)

## 7) Use of Figurative Language

Figurative language frequently carries an affective component, thus serving for a persuasive purpose. This is exemplified in our sample by hyperbole, metaphor and metonymy. The three linguistic devices are grounded on cognitive operations. Following Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014) cognitive operations are mental mechanisms which allow us to understand linguistic production and interpretation. The authors make a distinction between formal and content cognitive operations. Whereas formal operations enable us to access, select, abstract and integrate conceptual structure and can stand by themselves, content operations can be classified according to two basic relations, the identity (A IS B) and the 'stands for' (A FOR B) relations. While hyperbole and metaphor rely on identity relations, metonymy is a "stand for" relation. Hyperbole is based on strengthening: A is a point in a scale and B is an upper-level point in the same scale" (Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014: 94).

Hyperbole is realized in our sample through a range of linguistic expressions which provide mission statements with a "lexical boost" (Bhatia, 2014: 51) that increases the degree of persuasiveness of mission statements:

### (1) Superlatives

There is a frequent occurrence of superlatives in our sample. As a matter of fact, all mission statements contain superlatives:

(66) [...] Levi's jeans have become the most recognizable and imitated clothing in the world.

(67) We seek to develop the most creative, innovative and profitable entertainment experiences and related products in the world. (Disney)

(68) General Motors is driven to maintain the highest quality standards

### (2) Absolute all-inclusive expressions:

(69) We can meet your insurance needs anywhere, anytime. (Mapfre)

(70) [...] technology that makes life better for everyone, everywhere — every person, every organization, and every community around the globe. (Hewlett)

(71) Our mission is to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more. (Microsoft)

(72) And every day, all around the globe, we put people, processes and practices into place [...] (McDonald's)

### (3) Intensifying adjectives, adverbs and nouns with a strong positive connotation:

(73) [...] provide outstanding products and services. (Toyota)

(74) Gucci products represent the pinnacle of Italian craftsmanship and are unsurpassed for their quality and attention to detail.

(75) Our jeans have been an inspiration for [...] unwavering originality. (Levi-Strauss).

(76) Be a highly effective [...] organization. (Coca-Cola).

The various linguistic realizations of hyperbole sometimes occur together:

(77) Our technical excellence [...] drives us to bring the best of energy to every reality. (Cepsa)

(78) one of the world's most desirable fashion houses. (Gucci)

The expressions in (66-78) are all realizations of self-appraisal, a common strategy for self-representation in promotional literature (Bhatia, 2014: 66) and signify the firm's wide scope.

Unlike hyperbole, metaphor is based on a resemblance relation. The metaphor companies are people reinforces the persuasive intent of mission statements by (i) making an abstract entity concrete and thus closer to customers, and (ii) by endowing them with positively evaluated traits in corporate discourse. Koller (2009: 45) analyses the role of the multimodal metaphor "brands are living organisms/people" in corporate brand messages:

(79) Our DNA: We give energy solutions to people. (Cepsa)

(80) As an innovative leader, Toyota [...]

(81) Influential, innovative and progressive, Gucci is reinventing a wholly modern approach to fashion.

(82) [...] be a good corporate citizen of the world. (Toyota)

Our analysis yielded instantiations of further metaphors. Consider the examples in (83-85):

(83) [...] to lead this company as it continues an amazing journey. (Levi-Strauss)

(84) Our journey towards good. (McDonald's)

(85) It [the vision] creates a long-term destination for our business. Our Roadmap starts with our mission. Our values serve as a compass for our actions. (Coca-Cola).

These examples allow construing a journey metaphor to explain the companies' mission. The metaphor is subsumed within the general metaphor events are movements. In (84) McDonald's policies are metaphorized as movements aimed to a specific destination, namely integrity, as corroborated in (86):

(86) From the start, we've been committed to doing the right thing.

Coca-Cola's mission statement reflects a journey metaphor with the following entailments:

- 1) Companies are people moving towards a destination.
- 2) Doing business is moving towards a destination.
- 3) The company's long-term goal (vision) is its destination.
- 4) The company's values are the compass allowing it to reach the desired destination.

It is worth noting the journey metaphor emphasizes the idea of the company's continual development, which will result in greater innovations:

(87) The best is yet to come. (Microsoft)

Another metaphor instantiated in the sample is progress is forward motion as realized in (88-89):

(88) At Levi Strauss & Co., we're dedicated to progress and are constantly in motion.

(89) Be a [...] fast-moving organization. (Coca-Cola).

Occasionally the anthropomorphic metaphor subsumes a part-whole metonymy, the quality standing for the person, as illustrated by Mapfre's mission statement: *We are Service. We are Talent. We are Innovation. We are Commitment.*

#### 4. Conclusion

Mission statements are not merely corporate documents that describe a company's mission, vision and values and provide the basis for objectives, strategies, plans and tasks. Instead, as the analysis of 20 mission statements issued by big companies has demonstrated, mission statements are to be regarded as powerful tools to build or maintain customer loyalty. Their persuasive force relies on a range of strategies linked to logos, ethos and pathos, the three modes of argumentation in Aristotelian rhetoric. Logos-based persuasion is grounded on the logic of the arguments meant to provide a positive description of the company on the basis of factual information and an indication of its positive characteristics, its competitive advantage and its distinctive values. Ethos-based persuasion focuses on establishing the company's reliability through claims about its reputation and its commitment to serve customers. Finally, pathos-based persuasion appeals to customers' emotions by tapping into the company's concern about customer welfare and happiness. Appeal to logos, pathos and ethos are key elements in building a company's image, thus increasing its value.

Further research could be carried out in the following areas: (1) persuasive devices in a larger corpus of mission statements drawn up in different languages; (2) comparative analysis of persuasion strategies in mission statements of companies from different sectors; and (3) persuasion strategies in other business genres such as reports and brochures.

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