Mastering the international mission statement:
The effect of language and communication style in mission statements on
the identification with corporate values

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STATEMENT OF OWN WORK

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Date: 17-5-2020
Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether the language of a mission statement (either the L1 Dutch or the L2 English of the reader) and the communication style of the statement (masculine or feminine) would influence the reader’s identification with the values of the company. The research questions were ‘what is the effect of the language of the mission statement on identification’, ‘what was the effect of the communication style of the mission statement on the identification’, and ‘was there an interaction between communication style and language of the mission statement that influenced identification’. A study was conducted involving 150 participants. They were separated into four groups and presented with either a feminine Dutch, masculine Dutch, feminine English, or masculine English mission statement. The participants were then asked to answer questions regarding their identification with the company that was the subject of the mission statements. Findings revealed there was no significant difference in identification between participants who were presented with either of the four mission statements. A limitation of the current study was that it focused on a fictional organisation. Were the participants presented a mission statement of the company they worked for, they might have been more invested in the values of the organisation. Another limitation was the fact that the present study only focused on the masculinity/femininity dimension presented by Hofstede (1983), who in his work also included other cultural dimensions, which were not taken into account in the present study. Future research could focus on mission statements of a real company and present this to current employees, or future research could also take into account other cultural dimensions when executing the study.
Introduction

Mission statements are an effective way for companies to sell their corporate values to employees and other stakeholders (Klemm, Sanderson & Luffman, 1991). The mission statement is a short text that concisely states what the organisation stands for, and what values are held within the company (David & David, 2003). It is often distributed amongst employees of the organisation. When the values of the organisation are in line with the personal beliefs of the employees, these employees are more effective in their work (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003). It is therefore beneficial for organisations to recruit new employees whose values match with those of the organisation (Wheeler et al., 2006). Hiring suitable employees could be more difficult when the organisation has a foreign subsidiary that operates in a location where the culture is significantly different from the culture where the organisation originated. In this case, the company might want to adapt their mission statement to fit in with the culture in the location of the subsidiary. However, they should first identify the culture of their subsidiary, and understand how this culture is represented in a business context. Hofstede (1983) identified four dimensions in which cultures could differ. One example of these dimensions is the masculinity/femininity dimension. Companies could opt for changing the communication style in these mission statements to fit the culture of their foreign subsidiary. In addition to this, a foreign subsidiary could operate in a country where the native language of the employees is different from the one spoken in the subsidiary. In this case, organisational
management might increase a (future) employee’s identification with the organisation through the mission statement by translating the statement to the employee’s L1.

Whether an organisation should change the language and masculine/feminine communication style to increase identification with the organisation by potential new employees in a foreign subsidiary, was investigated in the present study. Participants from the Netherlands, a relatively feminine culture according to Hofstede (1983), were presented with one of four mission statement which were written using either masculine or feminine communication styles, and which were either written in Dutch (the participant’s L1) or English (the participant’s L2 or L3). The participant’s identification with the organisation was then measured with a questionnaire. The results were used to attempt to answer the question whether non-native speakers of English identified more with the values of a mission statement written in a communication style that matched their culture, and if they identified more with a mission statement that was written in their native language. Multinational organisations could use the results of the experiment to determine whether they should adjust their mission statement to be used in their foreign subsidiary.

**Theoretical framework**

**The importance of the mission statement**

Mission statements are an effective way for companies to sell their corporate values to employees (Klemm, Sanderson & Luffman, 1991). The mission as a formal statement means the essence of the business. It primarily characterises the identity of the business. This often goes beyond the identification of a specific product or service the organisation provides, but rather officially announces what the company stands for, and why certain values are so important to the organisation. An organisation should,
however, not just express what the business stands for in the mission statement, but it should also put this into practice. They could do this, for example, by showing their identity through products and services and through objectives of endurance, growth, and profitability (Rey & Bastons, 2018).

A business can also put the values mentioned in the mission statement into practice by having these values expressed by the employees of the organisation. Employees are the living example of what the brand stands for (Bendapudi & Bendapudi, 2005). Each interaction customers have with employees of a brand will influence the way they see the brand as a whole. For example, research has shown that service employee behaviour that is in line with the values of the company can effectively reinforce brand meaning (Baker et al., 2014). Therefore, it would be profitable for an organisation to hire employees whose values are aligned with those of the company. Many organisations use their mission statements to express their values to potential new employees. When searching for job openings online, for example, many companies make sure to include a ‘who are we’ section, the mission statement.

Organisations have attempted to develop a supra-culture within their organisation. This would mean that the values of the company become more important to the employees than their cultural values (Laurent, 1986). Due to the fast and large growth of the American economy, many non-American organisations have attempted to mimic American business practices and culture in order to experience the same (economic) growth. American culture has become more and more synonymous with corporate culture. Kirkbride and Chaw (1987) give an example of a Hong Kong company encouraging their employees to keep American business ethics in mind. Examples of these typical American business ethics are making profit, a
focus on getting more customers, developing an environment were the people of the company can excel and grow, developing an environment were rewards are encouraged and developing an overlapping corporate culture, a shared set of believes based on these an other values (Kirkbride & Chaw, 1986). This is merely an example of American corporate culture becoming prevalent in other cultures across the globe. Organisations that have chosen to implement this strategy of focussing on American corporate values, often reflect these sentiments in their mission statements.

Previous research has theorized on the concept of a supra-culture and has come to the conclusion that multinational organisations should consider the national culture of the subsidiary in which their company is active (Kirkbride & Chaw, 1987). The advise given in this research was to not just disregard the national culture in favour of a supra-culture, for the national culture is most often ingrained in the values of the individuals. The present study used the theories on national culture and organisational culture to test whether differences in values in mission statements would affect the way potential employees might identify with a company.

Hofstede’s masculinity dimension

The mission statement is a prominent tool for companies to express their values to stakeholders. Organisations therefore often put the mission statement on their website and other places where future employees might see it. One of the reasons they do this, is to attract candidates for future employment that identify with the organisation. People who have different values than the ones expressed on the site might decide not to apply for the position, solely due to these differing values. This way organisations filter out the candidates that do not represent the values of the company. Having a personal set of values and comparing them to the company’s mission statement, could
also mean that potential employees appreciate the culture of one company over the other (Wheeler et al., 2006). However, when an organisation is operating internationally, the differences in values can also be based on different cultural values instead of just personal preference.

Hofstede (1983) conducted a global experiment to examine the difference in values in the workplace between cultures. He defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind” (Rode, Huang & Flynn, 2016). Even though individuals all have personal values, their national culture is a set of beliefs that people learn when they are children. These beliefs are reinforced later in life (Strauss & Quinn, 1997). Hofstede was able to identify four significant dimensions in which cultures differ. Each culture was given a score of 0 to 100 for each dimension, based on how they scored compared to other cultures.

Of course not every individual person has the exact same values as other individuals from the same culture. The culture as a whole might be identified as feminine, it could still be that the individual would have their own values that might be more in line with masculinity. Previous research has therefore indicated the importance of measuring the values of individual participants when research is done based on cultural differences (Hoeken & Korzilius, 2003).

The four dimensions
However, we shall first focus on the four dimensions identified by Hofstede (1983). The first dimension that was identified was power distance. Employees from cultures that scored high on power distance indicated that they perceived it in a positive way when their boss made a decision without consulting subordinates, and they perceived their boss as having autocratic power. The second dimension, uncertainty avoidance,
referred to the employee’s intention of staying with the organisation for a longer period of time because they felt secure within their position. The third dimension, individualism versus collectivism, meant that employees valued freedom and independence over teamwork (individualism), or the other way around (collectivism).

The dimension that was researched in the present study was the fourth dimension, that of masculinity versus femininity. The masculinity/femininity dimension stands out from the other three because it is very broad and encompasses a large variety of elements. The masculinity/femininity dimension finds its roots in the idea that boys were socialized towards assertiveness and self-reliance, whereas girls were raised to be more nurturing and responsible (Hofstede, 1983). Therefore employees from cultures that scored high on this dimension (those that were considered more masculine) indicated they valued earnings, recognition, advancement, and challenge, amongst other elements, which Hofstede argued to be qualities more related to masculinity than femininity (1983). The employees from cultures that scored low on the masculinity/femininity dimension, those that were identified as being more feminine, indicated a greater importance of people and service, amongst other things. Table 1 shows all elements associated with either masculinity or femininity.

The elements associated with the masculinity/femininity dimension are of high importance to employees (e.g. what do they personally value more, helping people or making a lot of money). It would therefore be expected that adapting the corporate culture in a certain subsidiary, and therefore also editing the mission statement, to match the masculinity or femininity values of a certain culture would result in higher identification of either group with the company. However, to our knowledge, there is no previous research on the masculinity/femininity dimension with regard to the
topics employee identification and mission statements. Research that has been done regarding Hofstede’s dimensions and business topics focussed more on the other three dimensions, especially power distance and individualism/collectivism.

Bochner and Hesketh (1994) looked into the relation between the power distance (PD) and individualism/collectivism (IC) dimensions and job attitudes in a culturally diverse work group. They found support for their hypothesis that “broadly based cultural values spill over into the world of work” (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994). In other words, they showed that the PD and IC dimensions as identified by Hofstede (1983) were represented in answers given by employees from the same company who originated from cultures with different scores in PD and IC.

Other research supports Hofstede’s (1983) dimensions in a practical work environment as well. Farooq, Farooq, and Jasimuddin (2014) showed that the score on the individualism/collectivism dimension affects employee’s identification with corporate social responsibility (CSR). They found that certain types of CSR have a stronger effect on identification with the organisation by employees from an individualistic culture than by employees from a collectivistic culture, and vice versa. Research has also found that the IC dimension has an effect on which human resource management (HRM) practices are most effective (Rode, Huang & Flynn, 2016). Even though there is research that compares the identification of employees of different cultural dimensions with an organisation, none of this research has specifically focussed on the masculinity/femininity dimension.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminine quality</th>
<th>Masculine quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People orientation</td>
<td>Money and things orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life and environment are important</td>
<td>Performance and growth are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work to live</td>
<td>Live to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service ideal</td>
<td>Achievement ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence ideal</td>
<td>Independence ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy for the unfortunate</td>
<td>Sympathy for the successful achiever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levelling: don’t try to be better than others</td>
<td>Excelling: try to be the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small and slow are beautiful</td>
<td>Big and fast are beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men need not be assertive, and can also assume nurturing roles</td>
<td>Men should behave assertively, and women should be nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex roles in society should be fluid</td>
<td>Sex roles in society should be clearly differentiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in sex roles should not mean differences in power</td>
<td>Men should dominate in all settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unisex and androgyny ideal</td>
<td>Machismo (over manliness) ideal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The masculinity/femininity dimension and communication styles

The research presented in the present study attempted to measure whether employees identify with an organisation. Mission statements were used to conduct the experiment. The masculinity/femininity dimension was represented in the mission statements in two different ways: by using the values identified by Hofstede (1983) that can be seen in Table 1, and by using two different communication styles associated with either masculine or feminine speech.

The most well-known theory on communication styles is by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), who identified four communication styles. These styles are:

- Direct versus indirect communication
- Elaborate versus exacting versus succinct communication
- Personal versus contextual communication
- Affective versus instrumental communication style

This last communication style, affective versus instrumental communication, is the style that was altered in the present study. The reason for that is because this communication style is most related to the masculinity/femininity dimension. The instrumental communication style is very sender-oriented, meaning that the sender is the one who is in control of the message and the receiver is the subordinate and dependant on the sender. The speaker is simply delivering a message to the listener. Affective communication, on the other hand, is receiver oriented and takes receiver factors into account, for example a speaker would watch a listener’s facial expressions and adjust how they deliver their message according to these facial expressions (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

The connection between the masculinity/femininity dimension and the instrumental versus affective communication style has been made before (Hendriks et
A clear divide between gender roles is typical in a masculine culture. This means values like assertiveness, ambition and achievement are seen as important. A feminine culture which is characterised by an overlap of gender roles, on the contrary, views values such as understanding, modesty and concern for others as important. Therefore people from a feminine culture will make more use of a communication style with high regards for the receiver, and they would use the communication style that is very process oriented: the affective communication style. Self-enhancement and other masculine characteristics are, on the contrary, connected to the instrumental communication style (Hendriks et al., 2012).

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) themselves also relate their four communication styles to the Hofstede dimensions. The affective/instrumental communication style is especially in line with the values of the masculinity/femininity dimension. Other previous research has linked masculinity and femininity to affective/instrumental communication in other fields as well, such as the field of communication in romantic relationships (Trommsdorff & John, 1992). In masculine cultures, decisiveness is valued as well as performance and growth. People care for themselves as individuals and will not be as considerate of people in their society as in a feminine culture. Therefore, the instrumental communication style would be used more in masculine cultures. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, value people and interdependence, as can be seen in Table 1. They would be more inclined to construct a message based on the receiver.

The study by Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons (2001) identified specific language features that are closely related to the style dimensions as presented by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), as well as the dimensions identified by Hofstede (1984). In
the study by Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons, an inventory was made of what has been perceived as masculine or feminine language use. These language features can be found in Table 2. They linked the features to the four communication styles by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988). Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons have, by identifying the language features, presented a tool which was used in this study to formulate mission statements written in an affective communication style (which was seen as being linked to the feminine dimension) and the instrumental communication (which was seen as being linked to the masculine dimension). Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey argued that the affective and instrumental communication style were linked to the masculinity/femininity dimension (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988), and Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons have identified certain characteristics associated with the affective or instrumental communication styles (2002). This theory was used in the present study to formulate typical ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ mission statements.

*Representing the masculinity/femininity dimension*

In the present study, a mission statement was altered to a masculine or feminine culture by combining the Hofstede (1983) values, the ones presented in Table 1, the communication style by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) and the masculine and feminine elements by Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons (2001), presented in Table 2. An example of the Hofstede dimension would be mentioning assertive and independent employees in the masculine statement, and trustworthy service in the feminine statement. Communication style could be represented by, for example, using the word “we” in feminine statements, whereas the masculine statements simply referred to the organisation by name. Finally, Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons (2001) identified a set of
elements that could be represented in either the masculine or the feminine statements, which can be found in Table 2.

The experiment conducted in the present study applied these different writing styles to mission statements, resulting in relatively masculine and feminine statements. It was expected that participants from a relatively feminine culture (the Netherlands) would identify more with the organisation when reading the feminine mission statements than when they read the masculine mission statements.

As previously discussed, of course not every single individual from a certain culture expresses the same values as other people from that culture. Even though the theory developed by Hofstede (1983) was focussed on the dimensions represented in a culture as a whole, Hoeken & Korzilius (2003) argued that research conducted on this topic should also look at the values of individual participants and their position on the masculinity/femininity scale compared to other participants of the study. Therefore, in order to test whether personal values played a role in employee identification as well, the relative masculinity/femininity of the participants was measured in the present study as well. However, this was not the main focus of the study.
Table 2. Masculine and feminine language features as identified by Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgemental adjectives</td>
<td>Uncertainty verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>Oppositions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliptical sentences</td>
<td>Negations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to quantity</td>
<td>Hedges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locatives</td>
<td>Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I” references</td>
<td>Intensive adverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence initial adverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High mean length sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References to emotions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**English as a lingua franca**

Hofstede’s dimensions and cultural differences are not the only elements that organisations have to consider when implementing a mission statement in their foreign subsidiary. It is likely that the employees from the foreign subsidiary also use a different language than the one in which the mission statement was originally written. Because of globalisation, English has become a language that is spoken and understood all over the world, almost like a lingua franca (Phillipson, 2001). Many organisations have therefore opted for English as a lingua franca within a business context (Nickerson, 2005). This provides a unity across the entire organisation as well as ease, for there is no need for translation of corporate messages.
However, this also provides many problems for the organisation. Not every employee is proficient in English, which means they might not be able to understand corporate messages. When it comes to employee identification, an important issue is the fact that English often holds different meanings for people who speak it as their L1 compared to people who speak it as their L2. Non-native speakers more often express personal involvement in the native language, while being more detached to the subject when speaking in their second language (Dewaele, 2004). Personal values are an example of a subject with which a person has a high emotional connection. When an organisation uses its English mission statement in which it expresses their values in a foreign subsidiary, the employees in that subsidiary might not connect with the mission statement as they would in their L1. Not even if the values expressed in the statement aligned with their personal values. An example of people being more detached from the L2 can be found in a study by Dewaele (2004). In this study, the detachment became explicit with regards to the use of swearwords and taboo words (ST-words), to which attitudes are very ambiguous. ST-words in a person’s L1 are much more taboo than those in a second language (Dewaele 2004). Even though there would be no ST-words in a mission statement, the study does illustrate the fact that non-native speakers experience English differently from native speakers.

In early childhood, children experience higher emotional arousal and therefore link ambiguous language (such as ST-words) to their L1 as being more emotional. Emotion words in the L2 are not as deeply connected (Dewaele, 2004). The values of an organisation could also be considered as being emotional words. During childhood, people are taught their culture’s values, like ST-words. When reading these values in their non-native language they might not connect as much with the message as they would when reading it in their native language. Therefore it would be expected that
people are more likely to connect with mission statements written in their native language.

Emotional disconnect is not the only problem the use of English as a corporate language has. In every language there are words that are not inherently positive or negative, but that do seem to be associated with positivity or negativity. This is called semantic prosody, “the consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (Louw, 1993. P157). Examples of semantic prosody in English would be the words “cause” (negative) and “provide” (positive). Another form of semantic prosody is that of words that always seem to go together. An example of this would be the word “blonde”, which is in almost all cases is associated with the word “hair”.

Semantic prosody also happens in a corporate context. An example of this is the word job, which can be both positive and negative, and career, which can only be positive (Nelson, 2006). This provides a problem when English is used as a corporate language, for there is no linguistic theory to explain semantic prosody. Native speakers simply know they exist. Foreign speakers will have to learn semantic prosody by prolonged exposure to the language, or by learning it in a classroom. When using English as a corporate language, L1 speakers of English might find the positivity in a certain message obvious because of the use of semantic prosody, while a reader who learned English as a later stage in life may not make that connection (Nelson, 2006). This could present complications when it comes to the mission statement and subsequent employee identification. An example of Nelson’s (2006) findings was the fact that the word “boss” in a business context is predominantly negative, even though the word in itself does not mean anything negative. “Boss” therefore has the same negative semantic prosody as the word “cause”.
Nelson (2006) advised second language learners of English who are active in business contexts to learn the nuances of semantic prosody in business English. However, it is unrealistic to expect all employees to learn these subtle nuances simply because the corporate communication happens in English. It would only be justifiable for employees higher up in management. In the case of the values in mission statements, it would be possible that a statement written in English uses particular words to provide a positive connotation, which could be completely missed by employees from foreign subsidiaries. This might show itself when non-native speakers of English identify more with the organisation when they read a mission statement in their first language than in English. It might be a reason for organisations to translate their mission statement. This theory is examined in the present study.

**Filling in a research gap**

Previous research has already looked at the effect of cultural dimensions on different forms of identification with an organisation (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Farooq, Farooq & Jasmudin, 2014; Rode, Huang & Flynn, 2016), but, to our knowledge, none of this previous research has looked at the role of the masculinity/femininity dimension when it comes to identification with an organisation. In addition to this, to our knowledge no previous research has investigated the role of the mission statement concerning the identification with the organisation and Hofstede’s (1983) cultural dimensions.

Previous research has been conducted, however, to investigate the link between the masculinity/femininity dimension, writing style, and corporate communication (Hendriks et al., 2012). Hendriks et al. hypothesised that the people from the relatively feminine culture in the Netherlands would find a business
newsletter written in an affective style more persuasive than people from a masculine culture like in Great Britain. They also hypothesised that people from Great Britain would find a business newsletter written in an instrumental style more persuasive than people from the Netherlands. Hendriks et al. only found limited support for their hypotheses. They found that participants “recognized the style differences between the affective style and the instrumental style, but that these style differences had limited effect on persuasiveness at the level of nationality or at the level of individual value orientation” (Hendriks et al., 2012).

The study conducted in the present paper expands on the study of Hendriks et al. (2012). However, it did not compare a masculine and a feminine culture like Hendriks et al. did, but it focussed on participants from one culture (the Netherlands) which is considered a relatively feminine culture and presented each participant with a mission statement which was formulated using the affective communication style or the instrumental communication style. We also focussed on mission statements instead of business newsletters like Hendriks et al., and we presented the mission statements as belonging to a fictional organisation in order to prevent the participants from connecting the information they receive through the mission statements to feelings they already had about the organisation.

The present study also investigated the effect of the mission statements on identification with the organisation with regards to language (L1 or L2). Previous research has been conducted on the effect of the language in which a text is written on the identification with the text (Dewaele, 2004; Nelson, 2006) but to our knowledge no research has been done on the effect of language on identification with an organisation when it comes to mission statements. Therefore we will be filling a research gap in this regard.
Practical implications

Organisations want their employees to identify with the company values. In order to communicate the company values to the employees, amongst other stakeholders, they construct a mission statement. When a company operates in a foreign country, it could be that the values the organisation expresses in their mission statement do not align with the cultural values of the location of the subsidiary. Using the research conducted in this study, companies would be advised to either distribute the same mission statement as they use in their country of origin to the subsidiary in order to save time and money when, for example, they are looking for new employees, or they could be advised to focus on other manners of attracting new employees and getting them to identify with their organisation and have pride in their working environment.

Constructing a realistic mission statement

The experiment conducted in this study makes use of a fictional mission statement. In order to make sure that the mission statement is constructed as a realistic statement used in an existing organisation, the mission statement of General Electric (GE) was used as a template. These original mission statements can be found in Appendix A. In addition to using an already existing mission statement, the theory by David and David (2003) was also used to establish an effective mission statement.

David and David (2003) identified nine components that should be mentioned in the statement:

- customers (the target market)
- products/services (offerings and value provided to customers)
- geographic markets (where the firm seeks customers)
- technology (the technology used to produce and market products)
• concern for survival/growth/profits (the firm’s concern for financial soundness)
• philosophy (the firm’s values, ethics, beliefs)
• public image (the importance of managers and employees)
• distinctive competence (how the firm is different or better than competitors).

After studying 95 mission statements, David and David (2003) found that there were none that encompassed all nine components, which illustrates that the model they established is an ideal. This is further supported by the other guidelines they provide, namely that the statements should be longer than a phrase or sentence, but not overly specific, that they should stand the test of time but not be set in stone, and that they should project a sense of worth, intent, and shared expectations as well as the value the firm’s products and services stand for (David & David, 2003). When an organisation would want to implement all these guidelines, the mission statement would surely be too long and too complicated for stakeholders to follow. Therefore it is more appropriate to use certain topics discussed that are in line with the values of the organisation. We used this theory to develop the mission statements which can be found in Appendix B.

**Research questions**

The mission statement is the primary text that voices the identity of the organisation to stakeholders, especially internal stakeholders like the employees. Therefore a business will want to develop a strong mission statement that expresses those values clearly, both to establish the corporate identity as well as to attract potential new employees that already identify with these values. Whereas (small) local or national businesses will only have to keep in mind individual value differences in potential
new employees, large multinationals have to deal with structural cultural differences in their foreign subsidiaries.

Hofstede (1983) identified these cultural differences between various countries as cultural dimensions. Especially the masculinity/femininity dimension encompasses a number of elements that can be found in mission statements. Incorporating these elements in a mission statement can be done both by mentioning the values identified by Hofstede (1983) that are illustrated in Table 1 and by using affective or instrumental communication (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Mulac, Bradac & Gibbons, 2001). This leads to the first research question:

\[ R1 \text{ What is the effect of the masculinity/femininity dimension in a mission statement on the identification with the organisation? } \]

The second problem organisations have to deal with when communicating the mission statement to foreign subsidiaries is that of language. While the use of English as a lingua franca has its positive effects, and many companies use English throughout their business, it has been established that this can also cause problems (Dewaele, 2004; Nelson, 2006). These problems could express themselves when it comes to identifying with the values of the organisation. This leads to the second research question:

\[ R2 \text{ What is the effect of language, either the L1 or the L2 of the reader, of a mission statement on the identification with the organisation? } \]

We are also interested to see whether or not there is any interaction between the factors of the masculinity/femininity dimension and language. Could it for example be that the use of the L1 in a mission statement results in high identification with an organisation’s values, even though these values are presented in a typically
‘masculine’ instrumental communication style? This leads to the third research question:

R3 What is the effect of the combination of the masculinity/femininity dimension and the use of the reader’s L1 or L2 of a mission statement on the reader’s identification with the organisation?

Because individual values are not automatically the same as the overarching values of a culture (e.g., an individual from the Netherlands might hold personal values which would be considered masculine values), the participants were also individually rated as relatively masculine or feminine compared to the other participants. The effect of these personal values on the identification with either the masculine or feminine mission statements was also measured. In summary, all the participants were considered to hold ‘feminine’ values when compared to other cultures (e.g. the United States), but in order to see if there was a difference between personal values and identification with an organisation the participants were compared with each other to see if they were considered masculine or feminine. This was done to potentially explain any further outcome, but was not the main focus of the study.

Method

In order to analyse the effect of masculinity/femininity and language in a mission statement on identification with the organisation, the Netherlands was chosen as the country in which to conduct the experiment. Firstly because the language used in the Netherlands is Dutch, and English is the L2 or L3 for most people in the country. Secondly, the Netherlands scores very low on the masculinity/femininity scale, indicating that the Dutch culture is considered relatively feminine compared to other cultures. This way a clear expectation can be formed to come from the results: Dutch
participants are expected to identify more with the feminine mission statements written in their L1 (Dutch).

Materials

Mission statements

The independent variables were cultural dimension (masculine or feminine) and language (Dutch or American English). Four mission statements were written for a fictional company named TechniCo. Participants were informed that this was a fictional organisation. They were asked to imagine themselves in the position of a job seeker reading the mission statement when looking for a potential new job. The name TechniCo was chosen because it is neutral and simply states what the organisation does. It is also possible for a technology company to operate across the globe, which would mean it would make sense for them to use English throughout their company, including the mission statements. TechniCo is also a very broad name, it could mean developing new technology (innovation) or helping people with the use of their products through customer support (service). Participants were informed that this fictional organisation originated in the United States, but that it now had subsidiaries all across the globe.

The mission statements were based on the already existing statements of the American organisation General Electric (GE). This company has a subsidiary in the Netherlands, and uses different mission statements for their Dutch and English corporate website. The original mission statements by GE can be found in Appendix A. The GE mission statements already exhibited some elements defined by Hofstede (1983) and Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) to be either masculine or feminine, using techniques represented in either affective or instrumental communication styles.
The texts were edited in order to amplify the differences between the two mission statements.

The masculine texts include masculine elements as identified by Hofstede (1983) such as a focus on things as opposed to people (“making the world more efficient, profitable, and valuable”), ambition (“[TechniCo employees] operate with the highest ambition and passion”), assertiveness (leading new paradigms), a goal orientation (“making the world more efficient, profitable, and valuable”), and a selective worldview (the ability to change the world). The texts were also edited to incorporate masculine elements as identified by Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) like the uses of locatives and quantity (“in 62 countries”), adding judgemental adjectives (“world-class engineering”), and relatively short sentences compared to the feminine versions of the mission statements.

The feminine versions of the texts include feminine elements as identified by Hofstede (1983) such as a focus on teamwork and interdependence (“global exchange of knowledge”), a process orientation as opposed to a goal-orientation (“each process stimulates new innovations”), and service instead of profit (“provide customers with excellent quality”), amongst other elements. Feminine elements as identified by Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) were also added, such as elements of uncertainty (“we do everything we can”), sentence initial adverbials (“as the world’s leading technological company”), and relatively long sentences compared to the masculine versions of the texts.

The masculine version of the text was initially written in English using the mission statement by GE as a template before being translated into Dutch for the Dutch masculine statement. The English feminine version of the statement was
created by first writing a feminine statement in Dutch and translating this to English. All four mission statements can be found in Appendix B.

_Preliminary Test_

A pre-test was conducted in order to test whether participants would be able to identify the difference between the masculine and the feminine mission statements. 123 participants were presented with the Dutch masculine and feminine statements. They were asked to answer questions on how various masculine and feminine elements were represented in the text. The 11 elements as identified by Hofstede were presented, such as “making profit is most important to the organisation in this mission statement”. Participants had to answer on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The results of the pre-test showed that ten out of these elements were significantly different between the masculine and the feminine mission statements.

The elements that were seen as more important to the organisation in the masculine texts were making profit ($t(122) = 7.46, p < .001$) where the organisation from the masculine text was seen as valuing profit more ($M = 4.94, SD = 1.41$) than the organisation with the feminine text ($M = 3.62, SD = 1.56$), goal-orientation ($t(122) = 5.99, p < .001$) which was seen as more important in the masculine text ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.54$) than the feminine text ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.58$), ambitious employees ($t(122) = 7.41, p < .001$) were also viewed as more important in the masculine text ($M = 5.68, SD = 1.08$) than the feminine text ($M = 5.05, SD = 1.26$), macho culture within the organisation ($t(122) = 7.71, p < .001$) was viewed to be more important in the organisation with the masculine text ($M = 4.68, SD = 1.38$) than from the feminine text ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.42$), personal compensation based on performance ($t(122) =$}
3.86, p < .001) was seen as more important for the organisation from the masculine text \((M = 4.76, SD = 1.27)\) than the feminine one \((M = 4.20, SD = 1.08)\), and participants indicated \((t(122) = 4.72, p < .001)\) they thought there were more men working in the organisation with the masculine statement \((M = 4.76, SD = 1.22)\) than the feminine one \((M = 4.19, SD = 1.17)\). This final statement was relevant because in a culture that scores high on masculinity highly values traditional gender roles, but it has nothing to do with the concept of male or female. It simply means that men are more often seen as the breadwinners of the family in masculine countries, while women stay home.

The elements considered more important to the organisation in the feminine mission statement were service \((t(122) = 8.65, p < .001)\) which was seen as more important in the feminine text \((M = 5.49, SD = 1.14)\) than the masculine text \((M = 4.11, SD = 1.57)\), teamwork \((t(122) = 10.68, p < .001)\) was more important in the organisation from the feminine text \((M = 5.50, SD = 1.26)\) than the masculine text \((M = 3.44, SD = 1.58)\), listening to employee’s input \((t(122) = 4.14, p < .001)\) was also more important in the feminine text \((M = 4.67, SD = 1.26)\) than the masculine one \((M = 3.99, SD = 1.28)\), and social responsibility \((t(122) = 6.07, p < .001)\) was more important in the feminine text \((M = 4.60, SD = 1.29)\) than in the masculine one \((M = 3.64, SD = 1.33)\)

The only element where there was no significant difference between the masculine and feminine text was whether the organisation would appreciate employees voicing their opinions \((t(122) = 3.86, p = .103)\). The means and standard deviations from the pre-test are reported in Table 3. From the pre-test it could be concluded that the mission statements represented masculine and feminine values sufficiently.
Table 3. Means and standard deviations for the prevalence of elements from the masculinity dimension in masculine and feminine mission statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Masculine text</th>
<th></th>
<th>Feminine text</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making profit</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-orientation</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious employees</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macho culture</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to employee input</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal compensation</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More men</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subjects**

Subjects were approached via the network of the researcher. A total of 150 individuals agreed to participate in the experiment. 110 participants were female (73.3%) and 39 participants were male (26%). One participant did not want to indicate their gender. The subjects were randomly divided into four groups. 36
participants evaluated the English feminine mission statement. The English masculine, Dutch feminine, and Dutch masculine mission statement were each evaluated by 38 participants. The age of the subjects ranged between 20 and 69 and the mean age was 43 ($SD = 14.26$).

Subjects were asked to fill in the highest level of education they had completed. Most participants had received their HBO diploma (37.5%), followed by a Master’s degree (34.8%). 17% of participants had completed an MBO education, 5.4% had received a Bachelor’s degree, and 5.4% had finished education after secondary school. 38 participants indicated they were currently students (25.3%). 25 of these students were studying for their Master’s degree (65.8%), 8 students were studying for their HBO degree (21.1%), and 5 students were studying for their Bachelor’s degree (13.2%). 28 participants indicated they did not have a job at the moment (18.7%). 64 participants were working fulltime (42.7%), 38 were working parttime (25.3%), and 20 participants indicated they had a side job next to their studies (13.3%). Participants were also asked whether they had lived abroad for a period longer than 6 months. 39 participants indicated they had stayed abroad (26%).

Based on whether the participants received the English or Dutch mission statement, they were asked to rate how they perceived their language skills in the language of the mission statement. They were asked to rate their writing, speaking, reading, and understanding skills on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very bad to 5 = very good. The variable language competence was composed of these four elements. The reliability of ‘language competence’ comprising four items was good: $\alpha = .90$. An independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between English and Dutch with regard to language competence ($t(148) = 3.82$, $p < .001$). Participants
rated their Dutch language skills ($M = 4.59, SD = .48$) significantly higher than their English language skills ($M = 4.21, SD = .72$).

A Chi-square test showed no significant relation between version of the mission statement and gender ($X^2(6) = 3.77, p = .707$), which means gender was equally divided over the four groups. A second Chi-square test showed no significant relations between mission statement and education level ($X^2(12) = 8.91, p = .711$), meaning education level is equally divided over the four groups. A third Chi-square test showed no significant relation between the mission statement and whether the participants were students ($X^2(3) = .65, p = .884$), meaning there is no relation between the students and the four groups. A fourth Chi-square test showed no significant relation between mission statement and employment ($X^2(9) = 4.94, p = .839$). A fifth Chi-square test showed no significant relation between the mission statements and living abroad ($X^2(3) = 3.31, p = .347$). The results of the Chi-square test showed that the groups were comparable and that they could be used in the experiment.

**Design**

The experiment had a 2 (version of the mission statement: masculine, feminine) x 2 (language: Dutch, American English) between subject design. Participants were presented with one out of four mission statements, a Dutch masculine statement, a Dutch feminine statement, an English masculine statement, or an English feminine statement.

**Instruments**

The first part of the questionnaire required the participant to fill in personal information such as age, gender, and education level. The participants were then
asked to rate their language skills regarding either English or Dutch, depending on
which version of the mission statement they were presented with. Participants that
received the English statement were asked to rate their English skills, those who
received the Dutch statement were asked to do the same in Dutch. They were
presented with a five point Likert scale (ranging from very bad to very good) and
were asked to rate their writing, reading, speaking, and understanding in the language
in question.

Participants were then presented with one of the four mission statements. Next
they were asked if:

- the mission statement was understandable (“I understood the text”)
- the values the organisation was trying to convey were clear (“The text clearly
  conveyed the values of the company”)
- they considered organisation to be typically American (“The text was
typically American”)
- they had seen a mission statement like this before (“I have read a text like this
  before”)

These questions were asked to see if the participants understood the mission
statements, regardless of whether or not they were presented with an English, Dutch,
masculine or feminine mission statement. If one of the mission statements would be
regarded as incomprehensible by the participants, it would have a negative effect on
the outcome of the study. If, for example, participants who were presented with the
English masculine text did not understand the text, or if there was a significant
difference between this text and the other three with regards to how clear the values
of the organisation were, it could be argued that this would have an effect on the
identification with the values of the organisation. Participants were asked to indicate
on a seven point Likert scale if they agreed with the statements (completely disagree – completely agree).

Next participants were presented with fourteen statements that concerned “an organisation like TechniCo” in order to measure the identification with the company. The statements ranged from “I can identify with the values of an organisation such as TechniCo” to “I would like to be a part of turning a company like TechniCo into a successful organisation”. The questionnaire was based on the Organizational Identification Questionnaire by Cheney (1983). The original questionnaire did not just focus on the masculinity/femininity dimension. Therefore the questionnaire had to be modified to eliminate questions that were focussed on other factors. This was done by critically eliminating certain elements from the questionnaire without harming the end result (Miller et al., 2000). A principle component analysis with oblimin rotation revealed a two-factor solution, explaining 65.41% of the variance. The two factors were identification with values and organisational pride. The reliability of ‘identification with values’ comprising eleven items was good: $\alpha = 94$. The reliability of ‘organisational pride’ comprising three items was not acceptable: $\alpha = 58$. Therefore the fourteen statements were grouped together to indicate the variable ‘organisational identification’. The reliability of ‘organisational identification’ comprising fourteen items was good: $\alpha = 94$.

It has previously been indicated that research has shown that individual values should be considered when conducting research into cultural dimensions (Hoeken & Korzilius, 2003). The present study also conducted this research to see if there was a significant difference between participants that whose personal values were more masculine compared to the other participants, for their individual values might have an effect on the identification with the mission statement.
In order to see how the participants ranked individually on the masculinity/femininity scale, they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed on fifteen statements. Participants were asked to respond to the statements using a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = completely disagree to 7 = completely agree in order to determine whether they were leaning more towards the masculine or the feminine side of the masculinity dimension. These statements were based on a questionnaire by Hofstede (1983). The 15 statements were divided between six feminine and nine masculine statements. The reliability of ‘masculine’ comprising nine items was not acceptable: α = 62. The reliability of ‘feminine’ comprising six items was also found to be not acceptable: α = 50. Still, the difference between the two elements was calculated by subtracting the feminine scores from the masculine scores. A median split was performed over the difference in order to determine which participants scored relatively masculine and which scored relatively feminine. The variable was labelled value orientation. In total, 72 participants were identified as being relatively masculine (48%) and 78 participants were identified as being relatively feminine (52%). A Chi-square test showed no significant relation between the mission statements and relative masculinity or femininity of participants (Χ²(3) = 2.24, p = .525), meaning they were equally distributed across the versions of the mission statements. An independent samples t-test showed a significant difference in value orientation between relatively masculine and relatively feminine participants (t (148) = 16.93, p < .001). Participants that were considered more masculine scored significantly higher on the scale (M = -.45, SD = .47) than those considered more feminine (M = 1.69, SD = .43).
**Procedure**

An online questionnaire was conducted using the program Qualtrics. Participants were approached via different media. E-mails were sent with an invitation to fill out the questionnaire, social media posts were made with a link to the survey, and respondents were approached personally and asked to participate. Participants were encouraged to distribute the link within their network. Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were told the survey in which they were participating was to be used in a master thesis. Participants were informed that they were required to read a mission statement, and answer questions about what they thought of the organisation based on the mission statement. They were told that there were no wrong answers. Participants were not aware of the existence of different variations of the questionnaire, the different mission statements. After filling out the survey participants were thanked for their cooperation. It took respondents an average of 8 minutes to complete the survey.

**Statistical treatment**

A two-way univariate analysis of variance was conducted to measure the clarity of the mission statements as well as the effect language and cultural dimension had on identification with the organisation. The two-way univariate analysis of variance was also used to measure the interaction effect between cultural dimension and language. A third factor that was incorporated in the analysis was the individual score of participants regarding masculinity or femininity, and its effect on the identification with the organisation.
Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of certain elements of a cultural dimension identified by Hofstede (1983), namely that of the masculinity dimension, and language (English or Dutch) on the identification with the mission statement of a fictional organisation. The results of the experiment showed no significant effect of either masculinity/femininity in the mission statement or the language of the mission statement on the identification with the organisation. The results also showed that there was no interaction effect between these two factors on identification with the organisation.

Analysis of the mission statement

A two-way analysis of variance with language (English or Dutch) and version of the text (masculine or feminine) as factors showed no significant main effect of language on clarity of description ($F(1, 146) = 1.36, p = .245$). Cultural dimension was not found to have a significant effect on clarity of description ($F(1, 146) < 1$). The interaction effect between language and cultural dimension was also not significant ($F(1, 146) = 3.64, p = .058$). This meant that participants did not find the mission statement to be clearer depending on which language the statement was written in or whether a masculine or feminine writing style was used. All means and standard deviations are found in Table 4.

A two-way analysis of variance with language (English or Dutch) and cultural dimension (masculine or feminine) as factors showed no significant main effect of language on clarity of values ($F(1, 146) < 1$). Cultural dimension was not found to have a significant effect on clarity of values ($F(1, 146) < 1$). The interaction effect between language and cultural dimension was also not significant ($F(1, 146) < 1$).
Therefore participants did not think the values of the organisation were expressed more clearly in any of the mission statements, regardless of the language or the masculine/feminine writing style. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.

A two-way analysis of variance with language (English or Dutch) and cultural dimension (masculine or feminine) as factors showed no significant main effect of language on typically American (meaning representing more American values) ($F(1, 146) = 2.03, p = .157$). Cultural dimension was not found to have a significant effect on typically American ($F(1,146) = 3.65, p = .058$). The interaction effect between language and cultural dimension was also not significant ($F(1,146) < 1$). Therefore the mission statements with masculine values were not recognised as being more American than the statements with feminine values. The means and standard deviations are also found in Table 4.

A two-way analysis of variance with language (English or Dutch) and cultural dimension (masculine or feminine) as factors showed no significant main effect of language on recognition ($F(1, 146) < 1$). Cultural dimension was not found to have a significant effect on recognition ($F(1,146) = 2.34, p = .128$). The interaction effect between language and cultural dimension was not significant either ($F(1,146) < 1$). Participants did not find any of the four mission statements to be more recognisable than the others. All means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.
Table 4. Means and standard deviations for clarity of description, clarity of values, typical American mission statements, and recognition of the mission statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Clarity of description M (SD)</th>
<th>Clarity of values M (SD)</th>
<th>Typically American M (SD)</th>
<th>Recognition M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>3.86 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.08 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>3.13 (1.58)</td>
<td>3.84 (1.78)</td>
<td>5.16 (.97)</td>
<td>5.24 (1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>3.66 (1.68)</td>
<td>4.03 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.35)</td>
<td>4.63 (1.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>3.97 (1.87)</td>
<td>3.79 (1.86)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.13)</td>
<td>5.00 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Identification with the organisation**

In order to answer the research questions, a two-way analysis of variance with language (English or Dutch) and the dimension in the mission statement (masculine or feminine) was conducted. There was no significant effect of the dimension of the mission statement (masculine ore feminine) on identification ($F (1,142) < 1$), which answers research question 1. The tests also showed no significant main effect of language on identification ($F (1,142) < 1$), which answers research question 2. Furthermore there was no significant interaction effect between language and dimension of mission statement ($F (1,142) < 1$), which answers research question 3.

All participants were from the same (feminine) culture (the Netherlands). Therefore the participants were also asked about their individual values and grouped as either relatively more feminine or more masculine than the other participants. This was done to see if this would have an effect on identification with the organisation. It might also explain why there was no significant difference regarding the previously discussed research questions. However, individual masculinity had no significant
effect on identification ($F(1,142) = 1.74, p = .243$). There was no significant interaction between language and individual masculinity ($F(1,142) < 1$). There was also no significant interaction between dimension of mission statement and individual masculinity ($F(1,142) < 1$). Finally, there was no significant interaction between language, dimension of mission statement, and individual masculinity ($F(1,142) < 1$).

The means and standard deviations can be found in Table 5. Therefore, in the context of the present study, differences between cultural values would not be an explanation as to why there was no significant difference between the masculine/feminine communication style of the mission statements and the identification with the organisation.

The analysis of the identification with the organisation showed that participants did not identify with the organisation more or less if the mission statement was written using either masculine or feminine writing style or if it was written in Dutch or English. There was also no interaction between any of the factors: the dimension in the mission statement, language, or the value orientation of the participants.
Table 5. Means and standard deviations for the various mission statements in relation to the value orientation of the participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Dimension of mission statement</th>
<th>Value orientation</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

**The masculinity/femininity dimension in mission statements**

The first research question inquired what the effect of the masculinity/femininity dimension was on the identification with the organisation in a mission statement. The results showed that there was no significant effect of the masculinity/femininity dimension on the identification with the company.

The aim of this study was to fill a gap within the already existing literature concerning the masculinity/femininity dimension. This dimension has not been researched as much as the other three dimensions identified by Hofstede (1983) in the context of business communication and mission statements. The masculinity/femininity dimension is broad and encompasses factors that could be
argued to also associate with the other dimensions. For example, Table 1 shows that feminine cultures tend to have an interdependence ideal, whereas masculine cultures have an independence ideal. This factor is also represented in the collectivism/individualism dimension by Hofstede (1983). The score of the Netherlands in this dimension is right in the middle, scoring 46-47 out of 100. Therefore it could be that participants from the Netherlands did not identify with one mission statement more than the other, because they were already quite ‘in the middle’ for the collectivism/individualism dimension, and therefore did not have altering identification with the organisation when it comes to independence or interdependence.

Previous studies (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Farooq, Farooq & Jasmudin, 2014; Rode, Huang & Flynn, 2016) have all studied organisational identification in relation to other dimensions. None of these studies focused on masculinity/femininity or mission statements, but they did all find a significant relation between the dimension they manipulated and the field they were studying: the relation between power distance and individualism and job attitudes in a culturally diverse workgroup, the relation between individualism and the effectiveness of different types of CSR, and the relation between individualism and the effect of human resource management. The results of the present study show that changing the writing style of, and the values presented in a mission statement to reference the masculinity or femininity dimension alone does not seem to account for differences in identification with the organisation.

However, the present study is in line with the study conducted by Hendriks et al. (2012). This research also found limited or no effect of style congruency on corporate communication (in the case of the Hendriks et al. study, corporate
newsletters). One of the factors Hendriks et al. contributed this limited effect to, was the fact that individual values are not necessarily representative of cultural patterns. Previous studies (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Farooq, Farooq & Jasmudin, 2014; Rode, Huang & Flynn, 2016) all revealed significant differences between cultures that varied on more factors than just the masculinity/femininity dimension. There was therefore a greater difference between these national cultures. This might be represented in different communication styles used by these cultures. Further research should be conducted to determine if this is the case.

To possibly account for differentiating personal differences, the individual values of the participants were measured as well, whether they would be considered as scoring higher on masculinity or femininity compared to the other participants from the same culture. Previous research has after all shown that not every individual can be seen as a representative of their culture (Hoeken & Korzilius, 2003). Still, there was no significant effect between individual values (masculine or feminine) and identification with the mission statements (masculine or feminine).

Furthermore, previous research has also stated that international organisations are more likely to adopt American management styles when running their company (Kirkbride & Chaw, 1987). Implicitly, the American cultural assumptions are viewed as business values. Individuals from cultures other than the masculine culture predominant in the United States would still be able to identify with the organisation because of the fact that American values are associated with positive organisation values (Adler & Jelinek, 1986). In other words, Dutch participants would be able to identify with the feminine mission statement because they are from a feminine culture, but they could also identify with the masculine mission statement, because the masculine elements represented there are seen as (universal) business values.
The use of L1 or L2

The second research question inquired whether the language in which the mission statement was written had an impact on the identification with the organisation. To be more specific, would mission statements that were written in the L1 (in this case Dutch) result in higher identification with the organisation than mission statements written in the L2 (English)? This question was based on previous literature that stated that the language people communicated in during childhood would result in a bigger emotional connection than the language they acquired at a later age, their L2 (Dewaele, 2004). In addition to this, previous research has also shown that there are language subtleties that do not come from certain rules in linguistics, but that native speakers just innately possess the ability to pick up on these subtleties without knowing (Nelson, 2006).

The results showed that there was no significant effect between the language in which the mission statement was written, and the identification with the organisation. There are several explanations as to why this was the result of the tests.

The first reason for this could be the characteristics of the mission statement as a unique text. David and David (2003) identified the mission statement as a short text that should adhere to nine core elements. The short length and clarity of mission statements could be the reason why there was no real difference between identification with the text in the participant’s L1 or their L2. It might be that there were simply not enough subtleties like those identified by Nelson (2006) present in the text for it to have a significant effect on identification. This argument was also reflected in the fact that there was no significant difference between the clarity of the Dutch mission statement and the English mission statement. Participants were able to
understand the English mission statement just as well as the Dutch statement. We know this because the participants were asked to rate their language skills in either Dutch or English (depending on whether they received the Dutch or English mission statement), and participants rated their English skills lower than their Dutch skills, yet results showed that there was no significant difference in how well the understood the mission statements. This could indicate that the nature of the mission statement as a short, clear text meant that no significant difference could be detected between the identification with the Dutch or the English mission statement.

Another core element of a mission statement is the fact that it is aimed at a wide range of stakeholders. Even though it is primarily used within the company itself (Klemm, Sanderson & Luffman, 1991), the mission statement is still also intended for external stakeholders who are not familiar with specific business language either. The message of the statement can therefore not be too complex. The low complexity of the mission statement could also be the reason why the theory posed by Nelson (2006) on semantic associations had seemingly no effect on the participants of the survey. The short length of the texts could have been the reason there were no innate associations that an L2 user of English might have missed. Nelson (2006) furthermore indicated that exposure to L2 would result in non-native speakers picking up on these semantic associations. 28 out of 38 participants that were students indicated that their studies were at least partly, if not completely, in English. On top of that, Nickerson (2006) showed that English is consistently used in a business setting, meaning that many of the participants that had a full-time or part-time job would be exposed to English regularly. These participants were already exposed to the English language a lot.

Finally, globalisation has caused English to become a language that is spoken and understood all over the world, almost like a lingua franca (Phillipson, 2001).
People have become familiar with the language through television and internet. This exposure to language may have affected the semantic associations non-native speakers of English have with the language. It is possible that they now interpret English much like native speakers do, at least when reading a short text like a mission statement.

The theory presented by Dewaele (2004) that words associated with emotional content are more impactful in the reader’s L1 than in their L2 is also not supported in the study through differences in identification with the organisation. This was also reflected in the fact that participants showed no significant difference in clarity of values in Dutch or English. This is surprising given the fact that mission statements are intended to articulate the important values and the why of the organisation, which businesses use to make an impact on individuals. One reason why participants might not have been more affected by the values in the Dutch statements than the ones in the English statements is because the mission statement was presented as being a fictional organisation that the participants had no existing connection with. Therefore, it could be that there was no difference between the emotional connection evoked in Dutch texts or the lack of emotional connection in the English texts, and that there was therefore also no significant effect between identification with the organisation and the language.

**The interaction effect**

Finally, the research question asked to what extent language and the masculinity/femininity dimension together had an effect on employee identification. The results showed that there was no interaction between these two factors and their effect on employee identification. A possible reason for the lack of interaction could
be the innate qualities of a mission statement that require it to be short and not overly specific (David & David, 2003) as previously discussed. The short and clear nature of the mission statement may have prevented any significant effects between the two variables.

Another reason for the lack of an interaction effect on employee identification may have been the fact that mission statements are more intended for internal use, as proven in previous research (Klemm, Sanderson & Luffman, 1991). Employees that were already working within the organisation would be more involved with the company and the values of the organisation would be more important to them. In order to make the survey as relatable to the participants as possible, the statements all focussed on future employment, e.g. “I would be proud to be hired by a company like TechniCo”. The statements were all related to new employment within a company.

What this study has shown is that identification with an organisation does not seem to be significantly affected by factors such as language and the masculinity/femininity dimension within a mission statement. It seems that a mission statement could be presented to new employees in foreign subsidiaries without alteration from the original statement, given that the cultural differences between the culture in which the organisation originated and the culture of the subsidiary is mainly different in the masculinity/femininity dimension (Hofstede, 1983).

**Effects of the study**

Finally, the reason why the experiment had no significant results might have been the method of the research. The questionnaire was developed using an already existing questionnaire (Cheney, 1983; Miller et al., 2001), which was altered to be applicable to the participants of the present experiment. The original questionnaire was
formulated to be answered by active employees of organisation. The questionnaire used in the present study was altered to be relatable for participants who did not know the organisation. E.g., the question “I like working for this organisation” was altered to “I would like to work for an organisation like TechniCo”. The fact that the questionnaire was not presented to current employees working at an existing company could have had an effect on the results of the questionnaire. When people already know about the company in question, they already have certain feeling or opinions on the company. The original questionnaire (Cheney, 1983; Miller et al., 2001) did not just measure what people thought of just the mission statement, but of the company as a whole. The participants were already familiar with the organisation, and already had feelings and opinions on it. This was not the case for a fictional company such as TechniCo, used in the present study.

Limitations

The present study was not without its limitations. As discussed before, the mission statement is primarily used for internal consumption (Klemm, Sanderson & Luffman, 1991). The experiment in this study focussed on a fictional organisation. The participants were encouraged to picture themselves in a situation where they would get involved with a business like the one presented in the mission statement. The involvement of the participants in the scenario was very minimal. There were no real stakes to the experiment, and the participants did not have any emotional connections to the scenario. This is represented in the fact that the mean scores of the results were all fairly neutral. Mean scores of 3 or 4 were common. Participants did not especially care one way or the other. The limitation was therefore the fact that there were no stakes for the participants. If the participant was, for example, a person who was
actually looking for a job, and who was critically analysing a mission statement of a(n existing) company to see if they wanted to work there, they might have been more invested in the values of the company than the participants in the current study, who were simply asked to imagine they were looking at the mission statement of a company they might want to work for.

Another limitation could be the fact that Dutch people come into contact with the English language a lot, even during childhood, for example through school, work and media (Edwards, 2016). Therefore they might naturally pick up on nuances in the English language as presented by Nelson (2006). Especially corporate American English language, which is used in a business setting, through advertising and in the media amongst others, has resulted in Dutch people becoming acquainted with the English language. Therefore they might be able to identify with English values, as well as masculine values (which are represented in American businesses). Would the study be conducted in another culture where the people do not come into contact with English language as much, the results might be different. The skills of the Dutch people in the English language are therefore a limitation for this studies.

Future research

One of the limitations of the study was the fact that the participants were presented with a hypothetical situation. Therefore, further research could conduct a version of the experiment in an already existing company, comparing the effect of language (L1 or L2) and writing style (either masculine or feminine) of a mission statement in a situation where the participants were actually attached to the organisation and the values that were expressed in the statement.
As has been indicated before, further research could also conduct the same experiment in a culture where the participants are not as exposed to the English language through work, school and media as much. They could test whether the identification with the organisation is significantly lower in the L2 (English) of the reader when they are not exposed to the language as much as Dutch participants.

Finally, further research could study the effect of other, or multiple dimensions, and language and their effects on organisational identification in mission statements. This approach could lead to research of mission statements in different cultures than the one presented in this study. The effect of mission statements on employee identification in combination with language and Hofstede’s dimensions has not been studied extensively and further exploration of the subject could therefore fill a gap in existing research.

Practical implications
Organisations with subsidiaries in foreign countries face a number of potential problems. The problems discussed in this study where those of innate differences between the culture within the organisation and the culture in the region in which the organisation operates, and a difference in language. The question was raised whether organisations should alter their mission statements to be used in foreign subsidiaries.

The practical implication of this study for multinational organisations is that it might be unnecessary to rewrite or translate the original mission statement when presented in a foreign subsidiary. This advice should specifically be applied to subsidiaries of organisations that are located in a culture that is either more masculine or feminine, according to the masculinity/femininity dimension (Hofstede, 1983). Future research could prove whether differences in other dimensions would change
the effect of mission statements on organisational identification in different cultures. Translating the mission statements to the potential employee’s L2 might also be unnecessary, based on this study. The reader should only be able to understand the mission statement. It would not affect organisational identification with the company’s values.
References


Cambridge University Press.


Appendix A: General Electronic mission statements

Mission statement used by General Electric in English on the international website of General Electric.

GE (NYSE:GE) drives the world forward by tackling its biggest challenges. By combining world-class engineering with software and analytics, GE helps the world work more efficiently, reliably, and safely. For more than 125 years, GE has invented the future of industry, and today it leads new paradigms in additive manufacturing, materials science, and data analytics. GE people are global, diverse and dedicated, operating with the highest integrity and passion to fulfil GE’s mission and deliver for our customers (Company Information, n.d.)

Mission statement used by General Electric in Dutch on the General Electric website for the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

GE (NYSE: GE) is ’s werelds toonaangevend Digitaal Industrieel Bedrijf, dat de industrie transformeert dankzij software-gedefinieerde machines en oplossingen die verbonden, responsief en voorspellend zijn. GE is georganiseerd rond een globale uitwisseling van kennis, de “GE Store”, waarbij elke bedrijfstak toegang heeft tot dezelfde technologie, markten, structuur en intellect. Elke uitvinding voedt innovaties en applicaties in onze industriële sectoren. Met mensen, diensten, technologie en schaal levert GE betere resultaten voor klanten door het spreken van de taal van de industrie (Over GE, n.d.)
Appendix B: Mission statements used in the experiment

The English masculine text:

TechniCo drives the world forward by tackling its biggest challenges in 61 countries. TechniCo makes the world more efficient, profitable, and valuable by using world-class engineering, software, and analytics. TechniCo has invented the future of our lively industry, and today it leads to new paradigms in additive manufacturing, materials, science, and data analytics. TechniCo people are assertive, independent, and dedicated. They operate with the highest ambition and passion to fulfil TechniCo's mission and achieve the best results.

The English feminine text:

As the world's leading technological company, we do everything we can to inspire the industry with software-driven machines and processes that are connected, responsive, and predictive. We believe in a global exchange of knowledge in which each department has access to the same technology, services, structure, and intellect. This is how we accomplish a structure in which each process stimulates new innovations and applications in all of our departments. With enthusiastic employees, trustworthy services, and effective communication in the language of our industry, we provide our customers with excellent quality.

The Dutch masculine text:

TechniCo is een wereldwijde organisatie die in 61 landen de belangrijkste globale uitdagingen aanpakt. Door het gebruik van software en data analyse
van het hoogste niveau maakt TechniCo de wereld efficiënter, winstgevender en waardevoller. TechniCo heeft de toekomst van een opwindende industrie uitgevonden en maakt tot op de dag van vandaag nieuwe modellen voor fabricage, materialen, wetenschap en data analyse. TechniCo mensen zijn assertief, zelfstandig en toegewijd. Ze werken op het hoogste niveau met ambitie en passie om de missie van TechniCo waar te brengen en de beste resultaten te behalen.

The Dutch feminine text:

Als 's werelds toonaangevend technologisch bedrijf doen wij er alles aan om de industrie te inspireren met software-gedefinieerde machines en processen die verbonden, responsief en voorspellend zijn. Wij geloven in een globale uitwisseling van kennis waarbij elke bedrijfstak toegang heeft tot dezelfde technologie, voorzieningen, structuur en intellect. Zo zien wij dat, met een hechte samenwerking, elk proces nieuwe innovatie en applicaties stimuleert in al onze sectoren. Met enthousiaste medewerkers, betrouwbare diensten en het effectief spreken van de taal van de industrie leveren wij een uitstekende kwaliteit voor onze klanten.