

Master's Thesis

The nature of purpose for individuals within organizations, from strategy to corporate culture.

MSc in Economics and Business Administration – Management of Innovation and Business Development

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Abstract

The concept of purpose in business has been widely mentioned in relation to strategy and its components. The definitions that have been attributed to this element traditionally tend to underline its dependence on the expected impact of the corporate goals in giving a direction and inspiration for action. This view, however, may neglect the importance of other factors which are needed to explain and foster a shared purpose among the members of a social structure. This paper presents the evolution of the theories about organizational alignment and purpose, concluding that the purpose of individuals in an organizational context is twofold in its nature: it is both affected by strategy and by firm-specific variables referring to internal corporate culture. Such variables are further observed with empirical analysis on a sample of 2592 individuals taken from the corporate populations of two companies, an Italian one and a Danish one, in the pharmaceutical industry. Demographic and organizational filters are applied to detect trends and patterns, predictive modelling is used to statistically test the influence of the corporate culture variables under examination. Results are encouraging and show that certain aspects, like the perceived credibility of people in charge and the sense of camaraderie, assume a determinant role in sustaining the purpose of individuals. Generalization of the findings can also be made to a certain extent. Finally, the relevant strategies and practices adopted by the companies in the sample, with reference to corporate culture as a leverage for purpose, will be discussed.

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Introduction

The importance and necessity of purpose, and sense of purpose, in the business and financial world has become a topic of intense discussion lately (Battilana, Pache, Sengul, & Kimsey, 2019; Ignatius, 2019; Malnight, Buche, & Dhanaraj, 2019). It is not easy to give a unique meaning to the idea behind it, nor to explain why and how it differs from other prominent concepts in the strategic and organizational literature. However, the real big challenge ahead of us consists in finding the fittest interpretation of this concept, the one which will help the most companies across the world to navigate through the complexity of the hyper-competitive, globalized and rapidly changing business landscape of the 21st century. Indeed, any interpretation of a concept as the sense of purpose can be deemed worthy to explore and capable of bringing new knowledge only upon the satisfaction of specific requirements. First, it must provide with a solid theoretical framework to understand and read scenarios firms may be exposed to. Second, it must give a viable implementation strategy, which is the way by which real value can be effectively created out of the proposed interpretation. This paper aims at doing both and it will focus mostly on how to use the organizational culture as a key leverage in relation to the determination of purpose of employees within the firms they work for.

Thus, the goal is to find the relationship between the perceived sense of purpose of individuals in the context of the company they work for, and the firm-specific organizational culture which may determine its blossoming or perishing. In order to do so, the research will draw concepts and frameworks from the fields of business strategy, with references to the theory of mission statements and strategic planning, and organizational behaviour. Empirical analysis and modelling will be used, and the ultimate objective is to define what organizational features and practices with

respect to corporate culture may improve the declared level of people's purposes within firms.

The problem of Anomia: social and organizational reasons and effects

The term *Anomia* (Cohen, 1972) refers to the state of mind of individuals who have no aim or attachment nor purpose in an anomic society. Individuals don't share social goals, nor values; their daily activities keep going without them giving an intrinsic motivation to that ceaseless endeavour. In such setting, typically there is lack of sense of community, also called *gemeinschaft*.

Despite the commonality of symptoms, anomia can be articulated in two modalities; *Anomia of success* occurs when there is a continuous accumulation of materialistic benefits, which however leave no meaningful trace of satisfaction or appeasement in the minds of the people who pursue it almost mechanically. At the same time, *anomia of failure* presents itself to the individuals who are lagging behind in the escalate in this quest for empty objectives. The cause of that could be found in an unbalanced perception of what success is in society, perhaps too much oriented towards external symbols, both tangible and intangible, generally perceived as the successful ones which are worth of recognition.

In his research Cohen did consider the issue on an overall social level, it is appropriate also to remind the political and social context in which his study took form. Indeed, it was at the beginning of the seventies, just a few years after the students' movements across Europe and the United States, as well as profound economic transformations, shook the fundamental bases of the society of that period (Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). However, to a certain extent, the concepts he formulated could, and still can, be supposed to persist also in smaller social aggregates.

In organizations like companies all the members are cooperating, having each one different roles and responsibilities, to reach a common goal, usually set by the top hierarchical level, which has traditionally been identified with the profit-maximization by scholars inspired by the neo-classical school of the economic thought (Friedman, 1970). Regardless of the effective achievements of that goal, the people working in companies and firms may be experiencing similar dynamics to the ones that are typical of individuals in an anomic society. It is, thus, quite natural to read a variety of corporate scenarios bearing in mind the lesson taught by Cohen.

Theoretical framework: problem statements and research questions

In the introduction the problem of anomia has been presented as a forerunner in sociological studies of what has been then studied in the field of managerial research in relation to the concept of purpose, and the sense of it. It has been intended and studied under several lenses by academics throughout the years, many interpretations and organizational devices have been proposed to tackle the issue of its potential lack at a corporate level. Recently, as it will be later exposed, it has often been conceived as an inspirational factor for companies, which may serve as a tool to align the employees by giving an external impactful objective to achieve. However, there is not yet a comprehensive understanding of what are the characteristics of the sense of purpose, in the perspective of individuals within corporate settings, as well as about the mechanisms which may enhance it. At the same time, it is also partially unexplored how a push towards a purpose needs adequate support in the internal corporate culture.

The goal of this paper is twofold: first, it consists in providing with a complete theoretical framework to interpret the concept of purpose and its connections with

several areas of business studies, like strategy or organizational foundations. Second, the aim is to dig deeper into the relationship between the cultural factors typical of all organizations and their functioning to create positive conditions for a perceived purposeful activity of employees within the organizations they work for. Thus, the focus will lie in finding out the interactions between the key parameters and variables in the sphere of corporate culture and the role they can play in determining the extent to which the employees in a company may be manifesting a sense of purpose.

For such reasons, the research questions will be defined in the following way:

Research question 1: What are the relevant developments and implications drawn from literature about organizational alignment with respect to the purpose of individuals within firms, its characteristics and the tools used to enhance its levels?

Research question 2: What demographic or organizational filters may determine different outcomes on the sense of purpose of individuals within firms?

Research question 3: What is the impact of corporate culture variables in the determination of the purpose of employees?

Research question 4: Which organizational strategies and practices, in the scope of corporate culture, may a firm put in place in order to improve the sense of purpose of its employees?

With reference to the third research question, to support more valuable insights and a more specific outcome from the research, further detailed relevant hypotheses will be crafted and tested in the empirical predictive analytics section.

Methodology of the research

The first research question will be tackled in a qualitative way, through the analysis of contributions of literature in the area of organizational alignment, by developing a comprehensive theory which may be valid for the understanding of the phenomenon of the sense of purpose perceived by the members of an organization.

In the empirical section, in order to observe how the sense of purpose manifests itself in real life companies, the study will be using the databases made available for this research project by GreatPlacesToWork® Italy and GreatPlacesToWork® Denmark, to whom goes my deepest gratitude for the interest shown towards the topic discussed. In particular, the certified methodology of GreatPlacesToWork® is internationally famous and it is composed by two main tools, the Trust Index© employee survey and the Culture Audit Survey©, which allow companies to better understand what are the internal culture and climate strengths, weaknesses, perceptions and get suggestions from the point of view of the employees; thus, all these inputs along with the support of the professionals of GreatPlacesToWork® will make the companies able to undertake the most appropriate actions for a positive organizational change from within.

For the purposes of the research I was made available the datasets regarding the Trust Index© and the Culture Audit Survey© related to two companies operating in the pharmaceutical industry, one based in Italy and the other one in Denmark¹. Such choice was opted for reasons of comparability, considering that the employees of two firms operating in the same industry scenario may be exposed to similar external stimuli and may respond consistently. Nonetheless, the different national locations of the two companies may result in interesting and useful insights which will enrich the comparison: in fact, despite their common presence in the European Union market and the compliance to communitarian legislation, the organization and

¹ The two companies will remain anonymous for privacy reasons and as of the data processing agreement with GreatPlacesToWork® Italy.

culture of the two analysed companies may to a certain extent be affected by local, national, peculiarities.

To respond to the second research question, the empirical study will depart from a descriptive analysis of the data referring to the items that are grouped under the label “Pride” in the Trust Index© databases, both at an overall level and considering the Italian-based company, thereafter referred to as company *Alpha*, and the Danish-based firm, from now on named company *Beta*, separately. The “Pride” aggregate measure comprehends judgments by the employees about the perceived social importance and meaningfulness of their work, as well as considerations about the feeling of bringing value to the external community the firms are operating in. For all these aspects it was chosen as a proxy variable for studying the sense of purpose.

In this section of the analysis also additional filters will be applied to the answers of the corporate populations of *Alpha* and *Beta*, with the goal of detecting if there are any individual characteristics (eg. Gender, age) or job specific characteristics (eg. Seniority and hierarchical levels) which may prove to have a special influence on the answers given to the Trust Index© survey.

The empirical study will follow with its inferential part, which will address the third research question; it will aim at showing which culture and climate related variables may increase the chance to spread a sense of purpose among the employees of the firms in the sample. In doing so, the obtained answers will give substantial scientific evidence to show the goodness of the formulated hypothesis in Chapter 3.

Eventually, some purpose-reinforcing solutions adopted by the case-study firms will be explored to give an answer to the fourth research question. With the due care for the possible firm-specific particularities, the paper will proceed using an inductive logic and, as a consequence, it will try to extract general knowledge and best practices that could be re-arranged also in other organizational contexts, in different industries and geographical locations.

Developing a comprehensive theory to understand the phenomenon of sense of purpose for individuals within organizations

This chapter will deal with the investigation of the theoretical frameworks and concepts which will be needed to answer to the first research question.

A new definition of success within an organization

As Cohen suggests, a possible way to tackle the issue of anomia may lie in a process of redefinition of what success means within an organization. Many scholars have tried to give an answer to that (Andersen, 2008; Pinto, 2019) in the context of a project; thus, even though not entirely applicable to companies since projects have certain specific features, the formulated conclusions are worth reflecting on. Pinto adopted a task perspective, proposing that success can be achieved upon the condition of meeting the goals set at the beginning of the undertaken effort. Under such premises, the issue now may turn into the following: if, among the selected goals, there will be one, or more, which can be valuable in tackling the problem of anomia, regardless of the effective reaching of the external conditions of success: on time, on budget. On the contrary, Andersen believes in an organizational perspective; according to his view, success rests in more than just meeting the objectives related to the output of delivery. Success, and the degree to which it is reached, doesn't qualify in the same way for all companies or entities and it depends on the capability of collective efforts to create value and, ultimately, change for the better the organizations they are collocated in. Such value may, as a consequence, be identified with a large variety of items beyond the usual ones: for example, new knowledge and practices to explore, or even experience and closer relationships with certain stakeholders. In this case, the original question

posed by the research by Cohen may concern what are the right conditions, as well as the strategies and means, to look for in order to obtain what is needed to solve the problem of anomia within the organization by giving a purpose to its members.

Organizational alignment as element of success

The importance of purpose of individuals within organizations assumes interest in the field of managerial studies as the assonance of purpose across an organization could constitute valid basis for alignment. Thus, organizational alignment and how to foster it may become a crucial theme to analyse. In the early nineties Powell was the first one that posed the question of organizational alignment as a full-fledged key success factor in the market. In fact, in his study (Powell, 1992) he suggests that alignment possesses the main characteristics of typical competitive advantages: according to his view, it is scarce, non-imitable and non-tradable. The definition of alignment by Powell mainly focused on the relationship between structural components of the organization, which are size, degree of formalization and integration provided by the CEO's locus of control. The models that were built starting from these hypotheses prove that, *ceteris paribus*, those companies where those factors were indeed more aligned have higher market performance and profits over time. Yet, such approach encompasses indirectly the strategic decisions made by the company, only under the assumption that planning about a proper size and grade of formalization were purposefully made by the CEO after carefully observing the competitive market. At the same time, this definition doesn't have in its scope considerations about the work environment, such as corporate culture, which is, therefore, not taken as a factor that may generate purpose for the individuals and alignment towards the organization.

Academics who observed the phenomenon of information systems innovation over the years have also theorized certain models of alignment (Burn, 1996) in which

there is a constant interplay between human and non-human ingredients. They are the technology within the organization, as well as its strategic direction and its infrastructure; the work environment, culture and its processes; external market dynamics, such as the product lifecycle, and the business decisions that the companies have made to respond to them.

Certain scholars (Gratton & Truss, 2003) approached the subject matter from a human resource perspective. They recognize three pillars in the concept of organizational alignment, suggesting that a proper people strategy should be harmonized with them. The first pillar is called *vertical alignment*, it refers to business goals and strategies, their sharing and importance across hierarchical layers of the organization. An effective people strategy should intervene in creating coherence and mutual support between these different objectives pursued by the employees. The second pillar is defined as *horizontal alignment*, it may be intended as the necessity of an adequate set of HR policies that communicate the same underlying messages and overarching identity in all the contexts in which they operate. In other words, taking as central unit of analysis the human resources-directed actions and plans, vertical alignment could be named as hetero-consistency with respect to the corporate business strategy, while horizontal alignment as self-consistency. The third and last pillar proposed is the one named *action dimension*. It embodies the exigency of measuring how effectively the first two aspects of alignment perform in the real situations: action, according to Gratton and Truss, may reflect how the employees evaluate the HR policies and their consistency under the lens of the individual professional experience, norms and moral values. Thus, the final judgement about goodness of the results of any people strategy aimed at improving the overall level of organizational alignment will rest in the hands of the employees to whom they are directed.

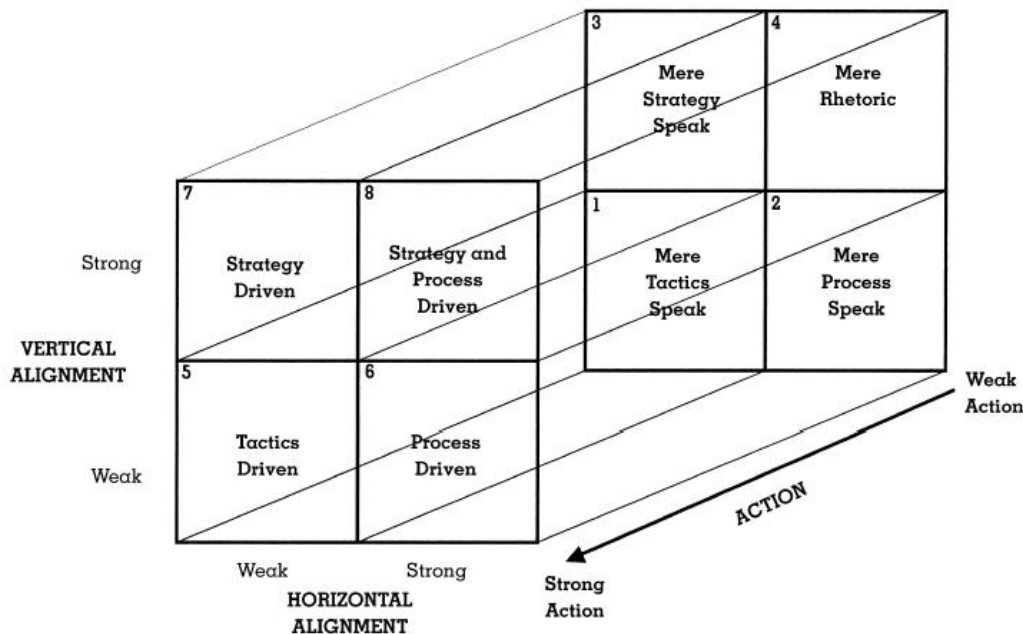


Figure 1 The Three-Dimensional Model of People Strategy, Source: Gratton, L., & Truss, C. (2003). The three-dimensional people strategy: Putting human resources policies into action. *Academy of Management Executive*, 17(3), 74–86.

Other authors (Kathuria, Joshi, & Porth, 2007) followed the distinction between vertical alignment and horizontal alignment, even if keeping a more traditional perspective, outside the analysis of people strategy of human resources-related studies. Indeed, they agreed on the idea that vertical organizational alignment may occur under the existence of shared goals and objectives among the members of the organization at various hierarchical levels. On the contrary, according to their view, horizontal alignment refers to a condition of cross-functional cooperation and synergies, across different corporate functions among which HR is just one component, not the only one. In fact, also the actions, and most importantly the interactions, of other departments, like marketing or operations, have their impact and repercussions on the determination of horizontal alignment, which will be positive if the principle of consistency is maintained preserved.

Recent research (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015), studying its effect on performance of the employees, supports the thesis that organizational alignment is a dynamic function of variables and processes which permeate across all the areas, hierarchies and departments, of corporate life: internal organizational structure, connection to the external market, work environment. As a consequence, alignment and its processes are the continuous ever-changing result of the combination of a wide number of elements from various disciplines in the field of managerial studies: corporate strategy, leadership and people, organizational culture.

Mission statements and their features

Studies on mission statements: four main aspects

In the last decades, creating mission statements has been considered by many companies a viable option to clarify and communicate their goals, strategies and definition of success (Drucker, 1974). With this tool, they would create both their external corporate identity differentiating it from the ones of the competitors and, at the same time, they would channel into a few sentences their attempt to set forth shared goals among the population of the employees and, possibly, give them an inner drive to align them and guide their work. Such topic has been studied under several perspectives and by several researchers.

The literature about mission statements can be classified in relation to four critical aspects (Alegre, Berbegal-Mirabent, Guerrero, & Mas-Machuca, 2018). The first of them is the one concerning the development of mission. This process has widely been intended as a strategic one: as such, according to the traditional literature on corporate strategy, it would fall within the planning activities whose main responsibility belongs to the top managerial levels of the organization (Miller & Friesen, 1978).

Even though sharing the same planning perspective behind the formulation of mission statements, some academics proposed alternative methodologies to create an effective mission (Lundberg, 1984). In fact, if the approach is the typical top-down which characterizes corporate strategy, the mission may not be enough representative of certain subsets of employees. As a result, it wouldn't be fully shared and agreed on. Therefore, there is the attempt to design a mission definition process so that it will ensure different voices of organizational members are heard and accounted for by the final result. In a sense, and with the due care and limits, it could be argued that such kind of procedure would allow the company to encompass in its mission the variety of practices present at the numerous levels of the organization. Consequently, even though remaining in the realm of planned activities, a mission statement made in such a way would include some elements which are rather aligned with the strategy-as-practice school of thought whose main academic representative is Mintzberg (Mintzberg, 1990). For instance, one possible piece of evidence supporting that, may be spotted in a bottom-up capillary approach which is aimed at expressing non-intended strategy embedded in organizational culture and routines established after long time within many subsets of the organization.

The second possible perspective of analysis of a mission statement is the one regarding its contents, which is, in other words, what are they built from and for. The academics have tried to perform content analysis on the mission statements for a long time, by vivisectioning sentences and key words; the results that were produced are characterized by a great variety and usually aim at identifying a certain number of specific components which are commonly used in the corporate missions. It is interesting to go through some of the most discussed categorizations of this sort both to observe the key general elements and to highlight if any of them has the characteristics, and the willingness from those who elaborated it, to give a purpose to the employees. A first significant contribution (Pearce & David, 1987) gives back eight components. These eight components could be evenly split in two groups. The

first group is the one including different items that could be together labelled as “What the company does”: here it is possible to better understand product specifications and scope, targeted markets, both in terms of customers’ segments and location, technology involved in the process of the daily operations. The other four common components of mission statements could be, instead, labelled as “Why and how the company is in the market” and, as the proposed label suggests, in this case it is possible to distinguish on a further level. Some factors, in fact, relate to the aspirations of the company to be achieved, both in the present and in the future, and the corporate philosophy that should be the guide towards these objectives. These aspirations may refer to a position of leadership in the market, returns for shareholder, which are objective external dimensions in a possible definition of success; the philosophy, instead, may be more connected to the purpose, to the inner drive of actions to the modus operandi of a company, which may constitute internal dimensions of a definition of success: a definition that, perhaps, could be more suitable to respond to the answers posed by the question of anomia. The other level of interpretation within this group, is composed by elements that show how the company wants to create its own identity and how it wants to be perceived by external stakeholders.

Similarly, successive studies followed the same approach towards the quest for components in the mission statements (Bart, 1997). In his research, Bart did study two samples of corporate missions, the first ones belonging to industrial goods producers and the second one belonging to consumer goods producers. Thus, he aimed at highlighting potential sector specific components of mission statements which are common to organizations competing in certain markets, taking as key discerning variable the targeted customer in the market: business-to-business and business-to-consumer. He identified twenty-five factors that may be encountered in missions, with multiple in-depth and extension profiles. The main differences that were discovered lie in two aspects: first, in the intensity of usage of expressions about technology-related aspects in missions of industrial goods producing

companies, perhaps given to the fact that such organizations are more likely to run highly diversified business, having only the know-how as its *fil rouge*. On the contrary, a narrower market focus can be spotted for consumer goods companies. Second, consumer good players present a larger “concern for survival” in their mission statement, whose explanation, according to Bart, may be related to the overall worse financial situations of this typology of companies.

The third and the fourth focal points of the analysis usually considered by the literature of mission statement do not explain nor classify any feature that they present as such in their formulation or definition; in fact, it is also deemed to be fundamental to investigate what is the influence a mission statement may produce on the world. Such influence was observed in two directions: the first one pointing at the economic performance of the organization, the second one towards the employees. One important research (Bart & Baetz, 1998) finds out the existence of a relationship, even if not extremely strong, between the presence of a written mission statement and a key metric of economic performance, which is the return on sales; more importantly, it is also found that the amount of internal stakeholders involved in the mission statement definition process is significantly positively associated with higher returns on sales. The pursuit of purpose, also, assumes a greater relative weight for an organization as, according to another finding of the study by Bart and Baetz, those missions that at least present an explicit organizational purpose can benefit, thanks to a direct relationship, from more favourable returns.

In the same spirit, another contribution (Germain & Cooper, 1990) established a relationship between certain components of the mission statements and profits. More in detail, it was noticed that those companies that show an above average customer centred organizational purpose in their missions, are more likely to obtain higher profits. These researches have the merit of being among the first quantitative ones proving similar links and suggesting that the final consumer of a product, or a

service, should be the economically-optimal focus of the business actions expressed in missions written by many internal stakeholders; however, from the perspective of the problem of anomia, it should be still proved to what extent a co-written mission as well as a higher customer centricity can give a shared purpose to the collective of the corporate employees and represent for them an internal drive towards success. Thus, these factors, accompanied by the predicted achievement of better economic performances, may not be the only ones that matter with that respect. Furthermore, some studies (Bagnoli & Megali, 2011) suggest that the performance of a company should be measured using also other parameters beyond just the ones signalling economic and financial results. Despite such recommendations were advanced in the context of the analysis of social enterprises, they still constitute a valid point to be debated, also widening the discussions to all organizations in general. More in specific, a measure of performance could be the very degree of satisfaction of a mission statement: in other words, it would require an estimation of the correspondence between undertaken activities, obtained output and mission. Consequently, it would be an useful experiment to observe if the presence of a declared mission, including the modalities of development and its process of definition, could in a sense have an influence on the capability of the organization to effectively pursue the claimed *raison d'être*, if any is present among the components of the statement.

Impact of missions on employees

The last perspective adopted in studying mission statements aims at assessing what an influence such a tool gives origin to on the employees within a company. Some researchers (Klemm, Sanderson, & Luffman, 1991) concentrated their attention on the values behind a mission statement. In particular, the conclusion that has been reached is that a mission statement is effective in producing also a shared sense of mission in the employees if they can spot a valid connection between their values and the declared organizational ones. It is singular that this study was among the

first ones that proposed an approach slightly different from the traditional ones according to which the mission could be deemed as a manifestation of strategy only: indeed, values, that have been broadly studied in relation to culture within organizations (Hofstede, 1980), have their significance too in such managerial tools.

Other academics (Ireland & Hitt, 1992) observed the matter from a leadership perspective. Among the many typologies of leadership, it seems, according to their view, that transformational leadership should be the one shining through mission statements in order for them to be shared by the corporate population. Transformational leaders are those who inspire by creating a vision of the future and providing intellectual challenges, as opposed to transactional leaders whose style follows a *do ut des* scheme of rewards (Turner & Müller, 2005). Other authors (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997) reached similar conclusions regarding the leadership style needed for inspiring missions after having tested several hypotheses about the relationship between the content, in particular the management of the meaning if applicable, or the modalities of communication of mission statement, taken as independent variables for the tests conducted, and elements such as work commitment, trust towards direct superiors and higher hierarchical levels. The evidence shows generally positive associations referring to these variables; they support the thesis that a mission becomes more valuable if well-communicated in a coherent and frequent way to the members of the organizations by leaders who are capable to make it feel relevant for them.

Another interesting research (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003) presents three aspects in the employees' approach to mission: depending on their combination, the influence of such statements will shape itself leading to different possible outcomes of what is called mission attachment. Thus, Brown and Yoshioka theorize that mission attachment is a result of awareness, agreement and alignment of employees with respect to the organizational mission. Furthermore, it is proved by their analysis that despite high levels of mission attachment are correlated with good levels of job

satisfaction, poor pecuniary compensations, in terms of low wages or unbalanced retribution schemes, may negatively affect the overall satisfaction. Therefore, the mission, if not well-complemented by proper salary conditions, may configure itself mainly as a potential signalling mechanism for companies to be used in the job market to attract certain candidates with specific profiles. On the contrary, it wouldn't be able to sustain and keep the mission attachment of employees at a sufficient level over time.

Beyond the content and the communication, the characteristics of the mission definition process may also be considered (Mullane, 2002) as a potential positive cause of influence on employees: in fact, it may be affirmed that a shared process of mission formulation, from the bottom hierarchies up and from all the functional departments within the organization, is a good way to both shed light on the goals and create a sense of responsibility and common participation to the achievement of the defined objectives. So, the path may be as valuable as the output in generating organizational purpose and give motivation to the internal stakeholders. It becomes clearer, after reviewing these studies, that the source of a successful impact of a mission statement on the employees, perhaps, needs to be found in the right balance of factors belonging to the organizational culture of an entity.

Missions between strategy and organizational culture

Regarding the theme of mission statements, the strategic perspective and the cultural one have both been adopted and applied by the academics across the decades. Some scholars (Campbell & Yeung, 1991) tried to reconcile these two apparently opposite views by embracing them both in a unique model. Therefore, such attempt aims at combining the “planning” features of a mission, those that made several academics support the strategic view, with the “moral” features of the statements that have been primarily considered by other researchers.

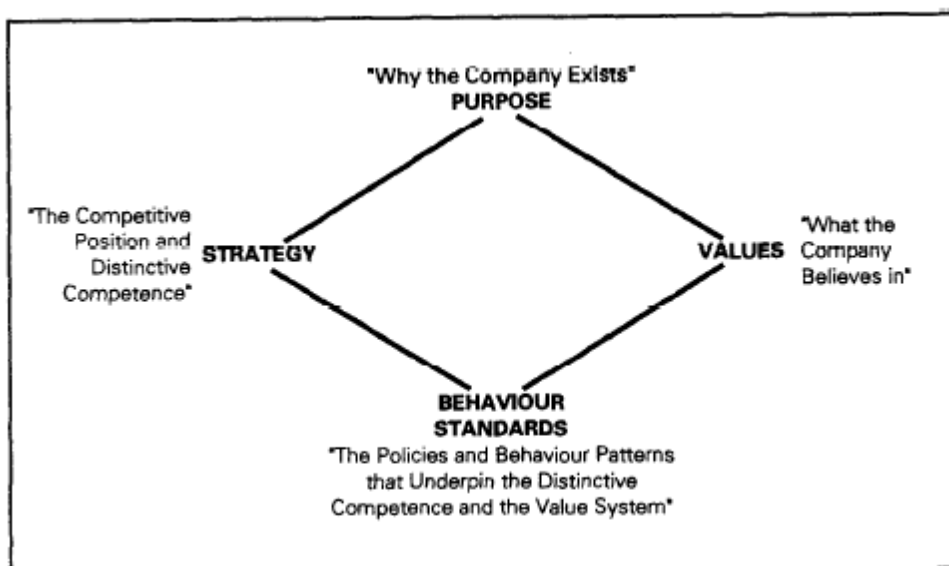


Figure 2 The Ashridge mission model, Source: Campbell, A., & Yeung, S. (1991). *Creating a sense of mission. Long Range Planning*, 24(4), 10–20.

As it is shown in the figure, the model is based on four pillars. Two of them are those traditionally pertaining to the organizational culture sphere: they are behaviour standards and values. They are typically company-specific intangible assets generated through the tacit learning and repetition of activities over time. The mission statements are managerial tools that try to convert them into something visible and clear for everyone. In the same manner, missions summarize in a few straight sentences the strategy of a company, relative to its competitive positioning in a market, targeted customers and distinctive capabilities. The formulation of this

sort of information is a managerial task assigned usually to the highest managerial ranks within an organization. It could be argued also that, to a certain extent and depending on the company as well as on the market in which it operates, the strategic planning may not be a totally unique asset: some overlaps may be found with the direct competitors' corporate strategy, if any exists. The final element is the one that is fundamental to connect strategy and the cultural pillars of the model, and it is precisely the purpose. The purpose answers to the question "*why* the company exists" and, it should be remarked that, just like the other three components of the model, it is not static over time. Indeed, the answer to that question may change across the lifetime of a company: at the initial phase of a company it could be identified with the reason why the founders decided to start up their enterprise, in the maturity, once many new collaborators joined, it may become something else. The purpose is the link as it is manifestly related both with the strategy, as it is determinant to establish *where* the company exists, and the corporate culture, as it expresses *how* it carries on the performance of its activities. Consequently, also the identification of an organizational purpose may follow a path of its own. It could be the result of the interrelationship between a top-down approach, whose contribution may come from managers with a strategic view on the future of the company, and a bottom-up approach, perhaps represented by the collective participation of the community made of the professional working for the company. Such a mechanism could ensure also the presence of a last "soft" factor in the model suggested by Campbell and Yeung. They called it emotional commitment, it could be both expected at the beginning of the overall process of purpose definition and it could also be reinforced at the end of this collective effort. Emotional attachment of the members of an organization to the organizational purpose could be compared to a leverage to speed up, or in the case of its absence, to slow down the initiatives and the motivation towards the achievement of the selected purpose.

Some authors put their efforts in analysing better what are the features that characterize what has been defined as "ownership" of the mission of the employees

(Kopaneva, 2019). In particular, were studied those factors in the mission construction and application that could, on the one hand, be a positive source of alignment and sharing of the organizational purpose; on the other, were also noticed and pointed out some negative factors which may provoke the opposite effect. It is significant that the phenomena within which the grade of ownership has been observed, the construction and application of the mission, in the author's view require a proactive involvement of the employees, thus plainly challenging the strategic school of thought; the latter, in fact, would rather study the possible outcomes of the assimilation and learning process of the mission statements, already formulated by the management, on its ownership by the employees. Furthermore, the research adopts a yet unusual perspective in the field of organizational and managerial studies, known as CCO. The acronym stands for *communicative constitution of organization*, it suggests that communication in an organization doesn't limit to the transmission of information: there is, instead, embedded in communicative activities an explanative function of reality, or better of a way of perceiving it, which assumes itself the traits of reality for those who hear it. (Schoeneborn et al., 2014). Communication, therefore, is deemed as the constitutive act of the network of interactions that build the reality of an organization. So, the research highlights several drivers that may go against the mission ownership by the employees within organization: the most severe ones refer to the lack of awareness of a mission and to the lack of interest in it, as it is considered as something that matters only for top hierarchical levels. In these cases, the workers feel alienated by a mission that, in their views, is almost irrelevant, or even hypocrite: this is due to the feeling that their every-day routines and activities are not inspired by the same principles, so their contribution is not influent to those ends that are addressed only by those who have the bigger picture of the corporate needs.

At the same time, the main drivers have been spotted and described thoroughly. The perception that the mission has a concrete importance is the main one and it is composed by numerous subfactors. They are, first and foremost, the feeling of

having an emotional two-ways interaction with the organization; therefore, the latter may also be influenced by the individuals; the possibility to set standards and norms, both in terms of operations and behaviours; the awareness of representing and passing on a corporate cultural heritage that dates back to the will of the founders; the reference to the mission in communication activities that take place in the business operations conducted on a daily basis. All these pieces of evidence go in support of a proactive construction of corporate mission that should start from a bottom-up communication by the employees. Such practice, on the one side, would be able to reduce the gap between an eventual statement and the tasks and duties normally performed. On the other side, it would also have the capability to favour the internalization, as opposed to the assimilation, of the organizational mission: these circumstances would ultimately lead to its effective ownership.

Adopting a cultural and even a CCO perspective on mission statements and on the relationship they are able to set up with the purposes of the employees who work within the organizations, with the goal to effectively answer to the questions posed by the problem of anomia, it is also appropriate to focus on the phenomenon of sensemaking. Indeed, this concept acquires fundamental importance in order to understand how individuals codify and decodify the external environment they are surrounded by, be it in particular studied under the assumption that communication represents its main foundation. The idea of sensemaking was introduced for the first time in the seventies (Weick, 1979). According to Weick, the process of sensemaking has seven characteristics. It is based on the construction of each one's identity and how it develops in relationship to the identities of the others; it is a retrospective phenomenon as it goes back in memory to interpret happenings that have already occurred. It is a social process, so it structures itself through the interaction with other individuals, and it is iterative in time, dynamic; it bases on the assumption of plausibility, around which only some selected information are built on; this process gives origin to a form of reality, environments which possess a meaning for the individuals who were their creators.

Weick also described more accurately the specific dynamics and components of the sensemaking procedure within organization. In this research (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), the sensemaking process is broken down into a few consecutive moments, each one characterized by some tasks that the individuals perform: these tasks need to be understood as context-dependent ones, which means that they may produce different results depending on the individuals, both the agent and the external ones, and the circumstances, like the corporate culture, involved. The only common factor is that they are inspired by the sense of plausibility, so that the output may be fitting with a sufficient level of certainty with the external premises and the selected information. In the development of the organizational interrelationships, the first role of sensemaking is constituted by sorting the flow of information that reach the individuals, which means a categorization and selection of the signals which are considered more adaptable for the ends of the process in the given organizational scenario. The groups of information are, therefore, labelled and organized so that, based on them, a plan of actions may follow. The actions perpetuated can be, according to a view that may be particularly agreed on by the representative of the CCO perspective thought, communicative ones, by verbal and non-verbal means, which have the effects of forwarding the sequence of events. Thus, it becomes clearer how sensemaking has a very relevant impact on the construction of an identity collectively within an organization, as well as potentially determining behaviours of its members.

This theory may, consequently, suggest refuting the idea of a top-down approach in bringing a mission statement to the community of members of an organization: the sensemaking process would, inevitably, require a re-elaboration of the information by the employees in such a way that it would be plausibly adopted, and more specifically it could inspire, in the daily business activities. However, the risk that the criterion of plausibility may not be satisfied by a top-down mission statement could be higher, because of its inherent nature which embodies a perspective on the corporate mission that is not indicative of the ones experienced by lower level

members. It could be even the case that this mission proposal may backfire against the whole organization in terms of motivations and sense of purpose of the employees, thus leaving free room for anomia.

Purpose beyond mission

Definitions and external impact

The concept of purpose has more recently been at the centre of academic focus as a standalone factor, as opposed to its traditional categorization among the elements of the mission. It has gained its independence and it has been studied accordingly as a requirement, as well as an opportunity, for firms to create more value both for the internal and the external stakeholders.

Some scholars, in fact, suggest to redesign the whole businesses around the principle of purpose (Malnight et al., 2019). More in specific, having a clear purpose may serve for two main objectives. First, it is a powerful weapon when facing the markets: indeed, it would help overcoming constraints and obstacles due to the present features of the market and of the competitive forces, it stimulates the attitude of companies to challenge the *status quo* in a positive manner, without losing their own barycentre and the customers' needs from their sight. In the second place, a purpose favours a holistic approach to problem-solving, expansion in new business fields that may relate to aspects concerning the corporate *raison d'être* and that the company may respond to adequately, even creating a larger ecosystem for their customers.

Other authors give to purpose a specific connotation (Battilana et al., 2019; Ignatius, 2019) which shifts a little its focus from the notion traditionally conveyed by the theorists in the literature of mission statements. In fact, purpose has been lately intended as a drive for companies to create, and measure, the outcome of their actions considering new parameters: in particular, financial performance and merely

profit-seeking behaviours, thanks to the presence of purpose, would be complemented by a philosophy and steps aimed at delivering sustainable value, under a social and ecological welfare point of view, to the community of stakeholders. Social and financial benefits cannot be deemed as separate conflicting ones, they should be structured together, and they should be inspiring for the population of corporate employees, with a likely increase in the level of alignment. It descends, in addition, that the nature of such a challenge would require a dedicated effort of top management in terms of leadership: it is needed to properly engage the internal stakeholders and develop a mature sensibility of its members towards this dual mindset in decision-making activities as well as operational ones.

It appears that part of the powerful drive that characterizes the concept of purpose lies in the perspective of a positive sustainable impact that an organization could contribute to make possible. This track is recurrent in all the case studies presented by the above-mentioned authors. To a certain extent, this idea and definition of purpose could be related to the one illustrated in the theory of exponential organizations (Ismail, 2014). In his book, Ismail tries to explain the phenomenon of huge companies in the last decades which were the main actors of rapid expansions at an unprecedented scale. He identified 10 organizational tools and strategies, half of which directed towards internal stakeholder and called collectively by the acronym *Ideas*, and the other half directed towards the external stakeholders and known by the name *Scale*². However, beyond this collection of factors which may or may be not proved to lead to an organizational competitive advantage, it is remarkable to notice that he observes that those case companies analysed have all in common something he defined as a *Massive Transformative Purpose*.

² Ideas: Interfaces, Dashboards, Experimentation, Autonomy, Social Technologies
Scale: Staff on Demand, Community and Crowd, Algorithms, Leveraged Assets, Engagement.

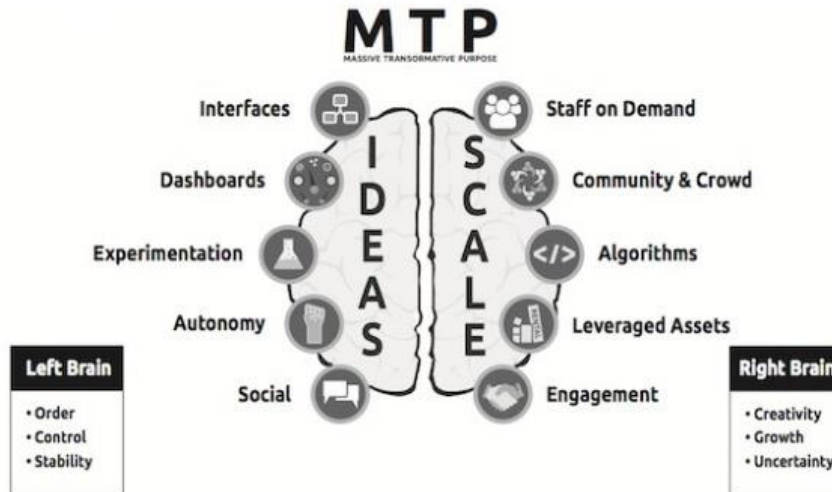


Figure 3 Exponential organizations and MTP, Source: Ismail, S. (2014). *Exponential Organizations: Why new organizations are ten times better, faster, and cheaper than yours (and what to do about it)*. Diversion Books.

A *Massive Transformative Purpose*, contrary to the previous interpretations of the concept of purpose, doesn't necessarily present a sustainable connotation, even though some cases analysed by Ismail do have it indeed³. What they do always share is a challenge to the *status quo* and a forward-looking aspiration. Such aspiration is so multifaceted that it may be almost unreachable: thanks to these features, it leaves the company with the possibility of not constraining itself under a specific competitive perspective. Any product, business or market which may have a role in following that direction represents a viable possibility of intervention for the company. According to the theory of exponential organizations, the MTP pushes the company that possesses it to act as a pioneer, to have the spirit of contributing to something employees, as well as the external community, may perceive as important and worthwhile doing.

³ For example, *Tesla, Inc.* set the following purpose: "Accelerate the transition to sustainable transportation".

The role of internal organizational culture

A recent study on the role of corporate culture (Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2015) shows how relevant an effect it can have on the population of the employees. In fact, culture may arrive where laws and regulations cannot. Legal bindings are more easily enforceable, they can help solve problems of moral hazard; in their absence, social norms and corporate culture may cope with the risk and softly lead towards a useful cooperation. Such discourse may be broadened to comprehend the purpose, and the sense of it, within the sphere of influence of corporate culture. Indeed, the very problem of anomia and the lack of sense of purpose, referring once more to the research of Cohen (1972), are due to the lack of shared social norms. Thus, a culture that supports the establishment of those norms may serve also as an instrument to reinforce the purpose organizational alignment and of the employees within a company.

Considering the contributions investigated, it could be deduced that the purpose may be intended as the element that inspires people and regulates the meaning of the individual actions of the members of an organization so to give it shared acceptance and consistency. It may be able to do so by virtue of its peculiar nature, which is twofold: both strategic and cultural. The strategic nature can be spotted in the influence that the expected external impact of the corporate goals will have on the development of the sense of purpose of individuals. The cultural side of the purpose lies instead on the extent to which internal organizational culture drivers affect and sustain the formation of the purpose of employees.

Empirical analysis

Having a clearer picture of what the purpose is and of what a tight relationship with internal corporate culture it has, the empirical research will focus on such topic to

address the second and the third research questions: they concern the interactions and behaviours of corporate culture variables with respect to the sense of purpose of the employees.

Dataset description

The total main sample of the Trust Index© datasets amounts to 2592 employees in the 2019 fiscal year. It is possible to split in two parts this aggregate number; on the one side there are 2471 employees of *Alpha*, and, on the other, 124 employees belonging to *Beta*. All the answers of the employees of *Alpha* are complete, in the case of *Beta* it is possible to consider 121 responses out of the total. This study will not make any specific reference, for intellectual property reasons, to the single questions of the survey but rather to the aggregate measure they give origin to in the context of the 5 areas of interest assessed by the Trust Index©, as it will be further explained during the analysis. On the contrary, the Culture Audit Survey© is represented by open-ended questions which are answered by the top management or by the responsible internal division on behalf of the whole company. Hence, the information about the several investigated themes are exposed mainly in a qualitative manner and they can complement and explain beyond the surface the insights that emerge from the Trust Index©. Such elements may clarify and present certain corporate rules, initiatives and strategies that, ultimately, could be the source of an organizational “culture advantage”.

In company *Alpha* the population reached by the Trust Index© survey is composed by 43.5% women and 56.5% men, the vast majority of the sample, almost 93% of interviewed employees, has a regular permanent work contract. Top management and middle management took part in the survey as well and account for roughly a 15% of the responding sample of workers. The distribution of the sample according to chronological age is positively skewed, the overall mean⁴ takes value 46.33, the

⁴ The dataset classifies employees in pre-determined age groups 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, over 55. Following the standard rule for computing the mean, median and mode of the overall sample, all

mode and the median 49.5. On the contrary, the corporate seniority of employees presents itself in V-shaped distribution, with a local minimum, corresponding to the 6-10 of seniority group, which interrupts what otherwise would have been a monotonic increasing distribution. Only some guesses could be made about the peculiar form of this distribution; for instance, the firm may have blocked the hiring of professional in a period spanning between 6 and 10 years ago, or that *Alpha* may have faced an exit of employees which were hired in that period. Finally, the employees of *Alpha* are spread among several local premises, all of which in the perimeter of the company in the Italian territory, and they belong to several organizational divisions.



Figure 4 Source: Elaboration from dataset

the values are rounded to their within-group median. The upper age limit was conventionally set to 67 which is the retirement age in Italy according to D.L. 201/2011 and successive reforms.

Table 1 Source: Elaboration from dataset

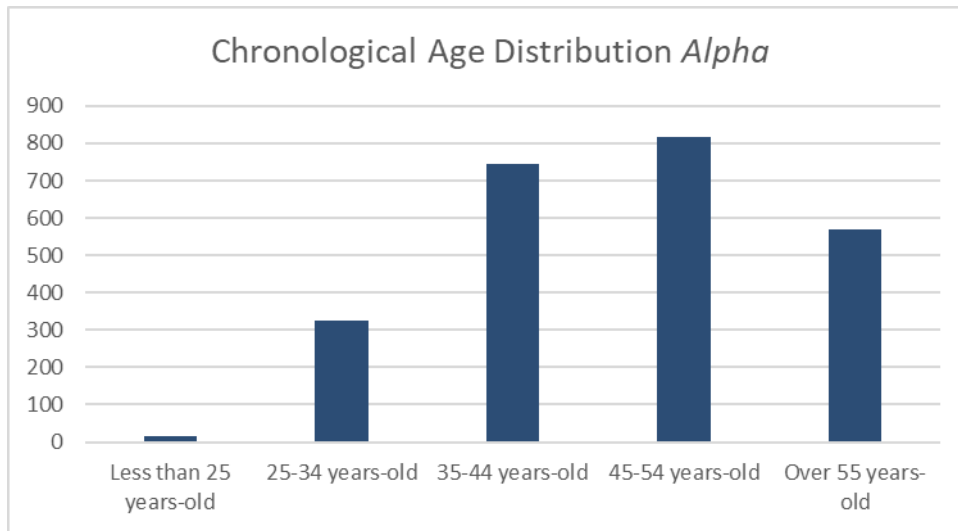
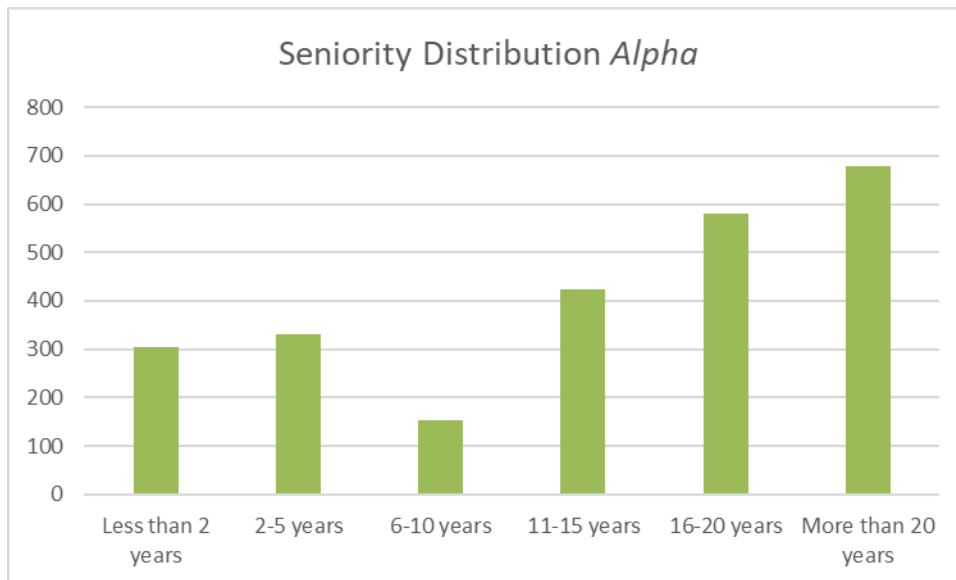


Table 2 Source: Elaboration from dataset



The sample drawn from company *Beta* is made of 64.35% women and the remaining 35.65% men employees. Out of the total questioned workers of *Beta* 95.87% enjoy a permanent work contract, only less than 5% have a temporary one. In the sample there are 15.18% respondents that occupy managerial positions, both middle and

top management. All the others do not have any managerial responsibility. The chronological age distribution of *Beta* is slightly positively skewed, as the mean⁵ corresponds to 44.72 and both the mode and the median are higher, coinciding with the value 50. The distribution of age of seniority within the company is instead rather negatively skewed, it indicates that around 56% of the employees taking part in the survey were hired less than 5 years ago. Nonetheless, the mean, which falls in the 6-10 years group of seniority, is higher than the mode and the median: that is what allows to state the above consideration about the skewness of the curve.

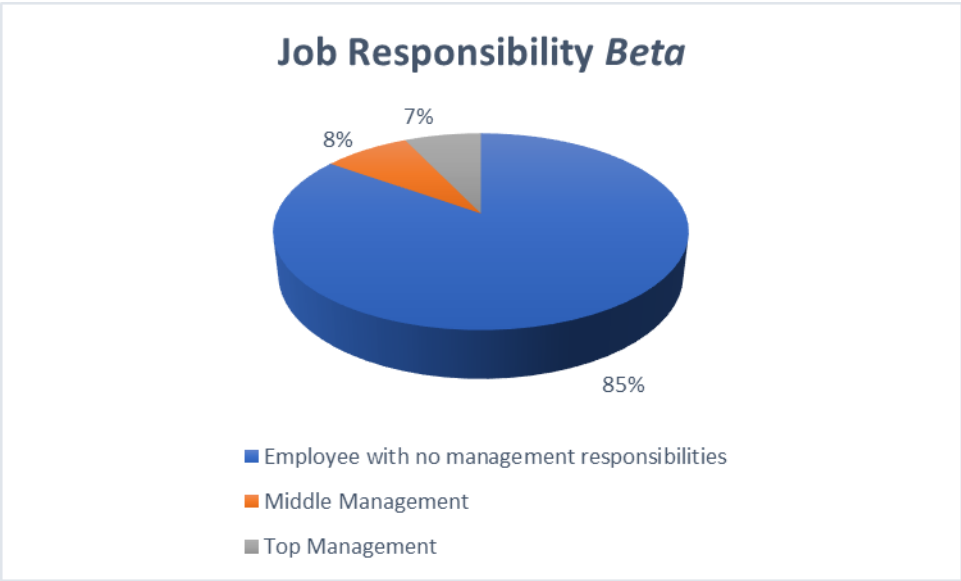


Figure 5 Source: Elaboration from dataset

⁵ The dataset classifies employees in pre-determined age groups 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65. The computation of mean, median and mode follows the same procedure exposed in footnote 2.

Table 3 Source: Elaboration from dataset

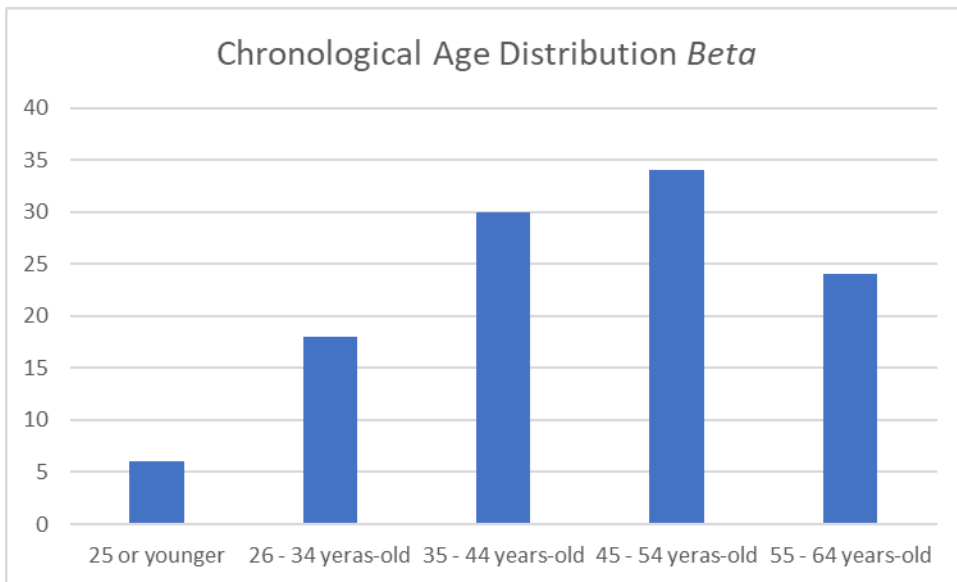
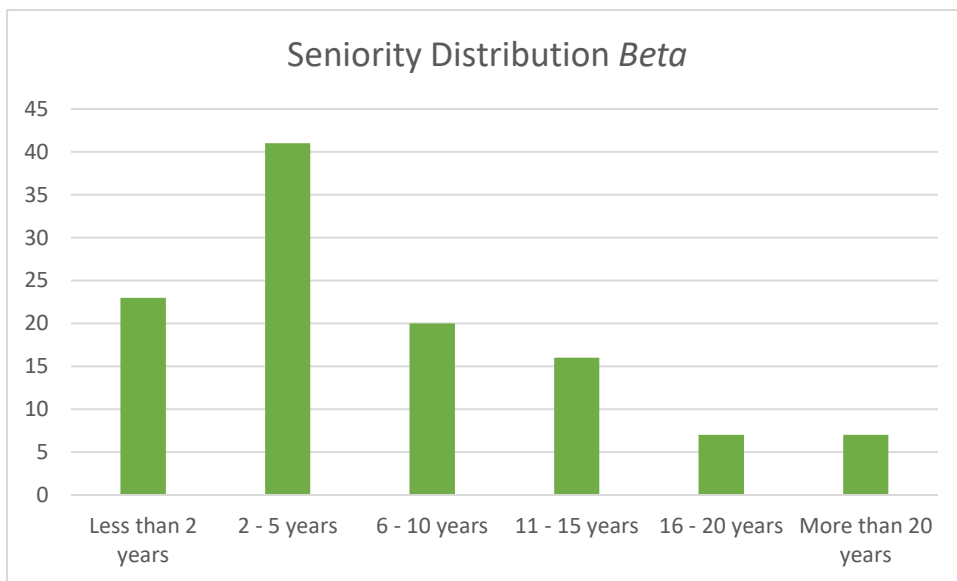


Table 4 Source: Elaboration from dataset



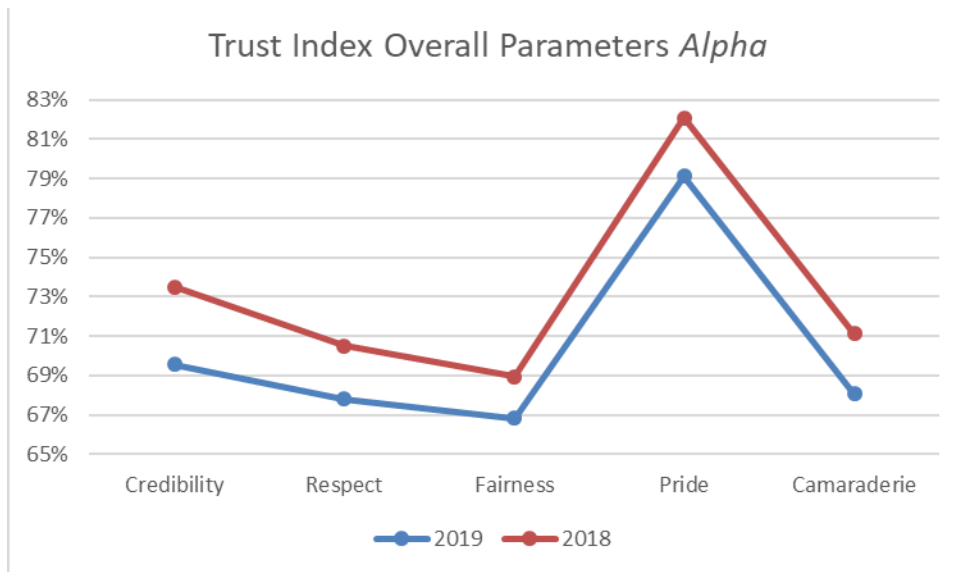
Occasionally some references will be made also to the answers of the employees of *Alpha* and *Beta* given in the fiscal year 2018, which are respectively 2156 and 119.

Descriptive analytics

The Trust Index© is composed by several items which are the building blocks of 5 thematic parametric measures. They are “Credibility”, “Respect”, “Fairness”, “Pride”, “Camaraderie”. It is necessary to remark that, due to its specific features and the methodology of determination applied by GreatPlacesToWork®, “Pride” is taken as proxy to the sense of purpose declared by the employees. The descriptive analytics will serve to comprehend its interactions and how certain filters, demographic and organizational, may matter for the sense of purpose, as of the second research question.

Descriptive analytics of company *Alpha*

Table 5 Source: Elaboration from dataset



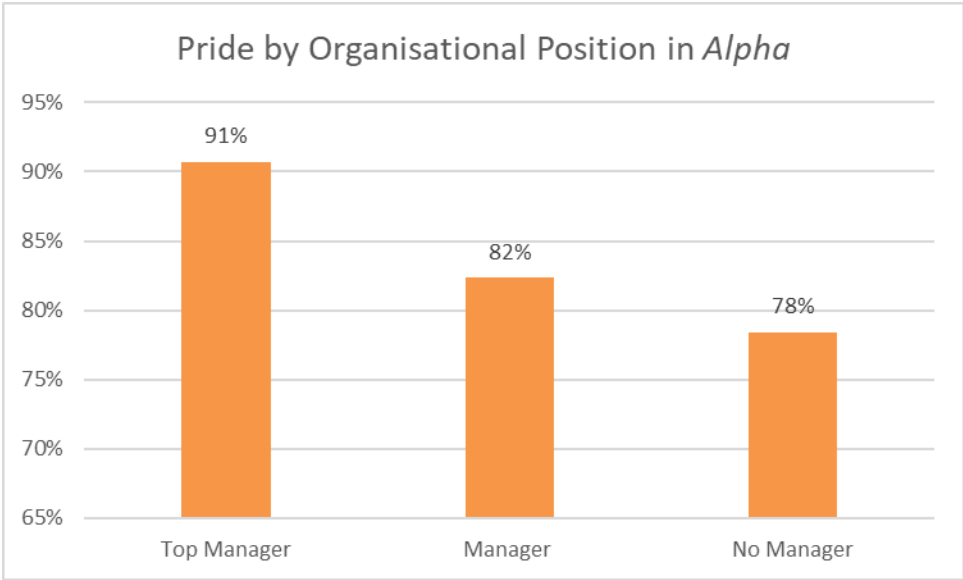
In the table above the profile of company Alpha with respect to the Trust Index© aggregate variables is presented. In 2019 the overall score of the “Pride” section, the one reflecting the sense of purpose of the employees, for company *Alpha* is 79%. By the graphical representation it can also be deduced that “Pride” represents the main organizational strength highlighted by the employees of *Alpha*, both in the past and in the present year; it stands out from the other two most relevant measures, according to the preferences of the workers, keeping a roughly 10% gap distance with respect to both. So, except for the “Pride” variable, each of the other theme-related measure investigated reached scores in between 65% and 70% in 2019, showing slight decreases from 2018 of the entity from 2 to 4 percentage points.

In percentage terms it is possible to notice a moderate decrease with respect to the same “Pride” parameter observed in the dataset from the previous fiscal year; despite this, due to the increase in the number of people reached by the survey, there is a increment in absolute terms: a roughly 15% increase of the respondents sample entailed a 10.49% rise in the degree of the pride to work in company *Alpha* declare the employees. Similar dynamics occurred also for the items concerning the other parameters of the survey, for instance in the case of the “Fairness” measure.

Keeping the focus of the research on “Pride”, the following charts report how the personal and organizational factors related to the filters exposed in the dataset description may reveal alternative tendencies in sub-sets of the organization of *Alpha*. Organizational filters will be applied first, in particular with respect to the

degree of responsibilities and with the typology of activities carried out in the company departments.

Table 6 Source: Elaboration from dataset

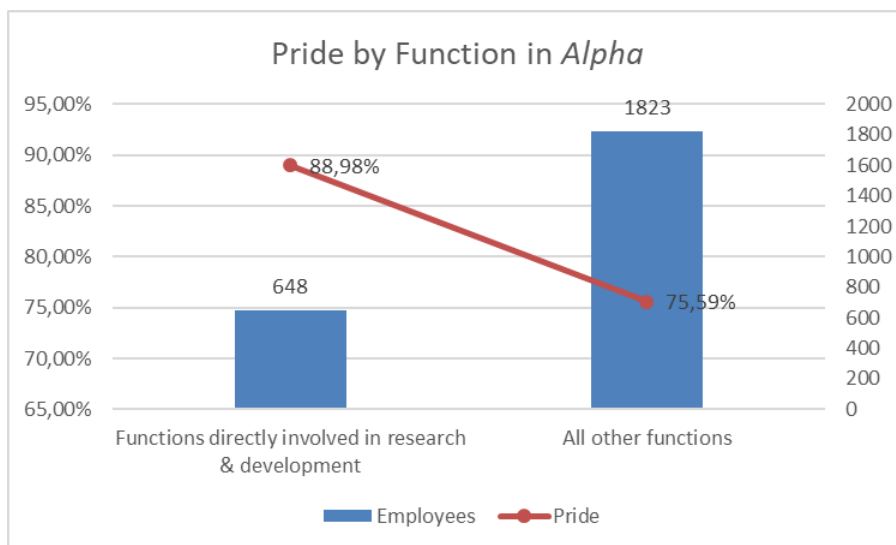


The level of “Pride” among the professionals who work at *Alpha* is characterized, on average, by remarkable discrepancies. Indeed, the graph clearly depicts a descending order of magnitude of this variable within subsets of the corporate sample, following the same descending order of the organizational hierarchies. Thus, when it comes to perceived “Pride”, the average gap between the top managers of *Alpha* and the employees with the minor degree of decision-making responsibilities consists of 13 percentage points. Furthermore, it results that the highest leap regarding the registered average “Pride” occurs between the top managerial positions and middle management ones (9 percentage points), whereas only a few points separate the latter from all the rest of the employees. As mentioned before, the overall score of “Pride” assessed in the whole company is 79%; we can clearly conclude that the top managers and, to a lesser extent, the middle managers represent the extreme positive outliers of a distribution; however, due to their scarcity in weight, considering the absolute number of employees with

managerial roles, their evaluations are not sufficient to induce a upwards shift of the curve and its mean.

From a business perspective, the interpretation of this data is quite immediate. The top hierarchical figures in the organization, those who can see “the big picture” and shape strategically the company they lead, will manifest a higher identification of their sense of purpose with the corporate one. Despite not having regard yet for the results achieved and the satisfaction with them, a general consequence of the described situation is that the main actors will feel, *ceteris paribus*, more in syntonie and proud than the other employees.

Table 7 Source: Elaboration from dataset



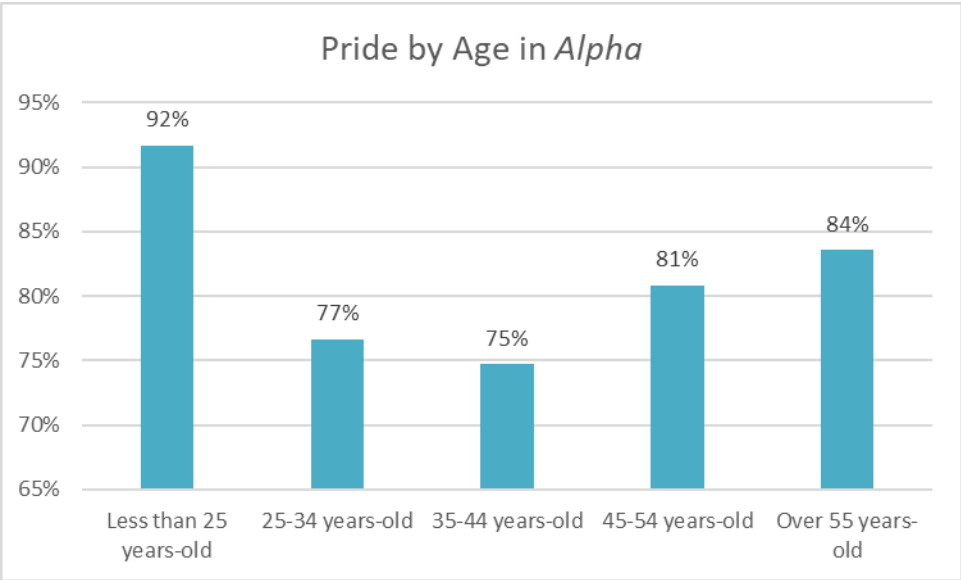
The second component to review from an organizational point of view relates to the typology of operations employees perform in their daily routines, as of the division they are assigned to. In the case of *Alpha*, which operates in the pharma business, it was possible to sort the employees depending on the extent to which they are involved in medical efforts; so, according to this categorization, about a quarter of the surveyed members of the organization are engaged, directly and indirectly, in pharmaceutical research and development of remedies and treatments in several

medical branches; the larger remaining portion of the sample belongs to functions, from sales and delivery to staff, which do not require the extensive medical knowledge needed in the laboratories. It is, therefore, very interesting to comment on how this organizational feature produces such a difference in terms of the average “Pride” score assessed in these groups. Indeed almost 14 percentage points, that are those separating the two mean values, represent a significant gap.

The deduction of this evidence is that those who can give a decisive contribution in the product development, in this case medicines, and, thus, can observe the impact of their products on the final customers, that is *Alpha* helping people recover from diseases, will on average declare themselves prouder. Consequently, their feeling of sense of purpose will be more likely to reach higher peaks. Still, it should be mentioned that perhaps such a distance between the average “Pride” of the two subsets of the population may also be reinforced by the peculiar nature of the goods traded by *Alpha* and their social fundamental role.

The next filters that will be used are the ones concerning individual characteristics outside the scope of any formal organizational structure and function.

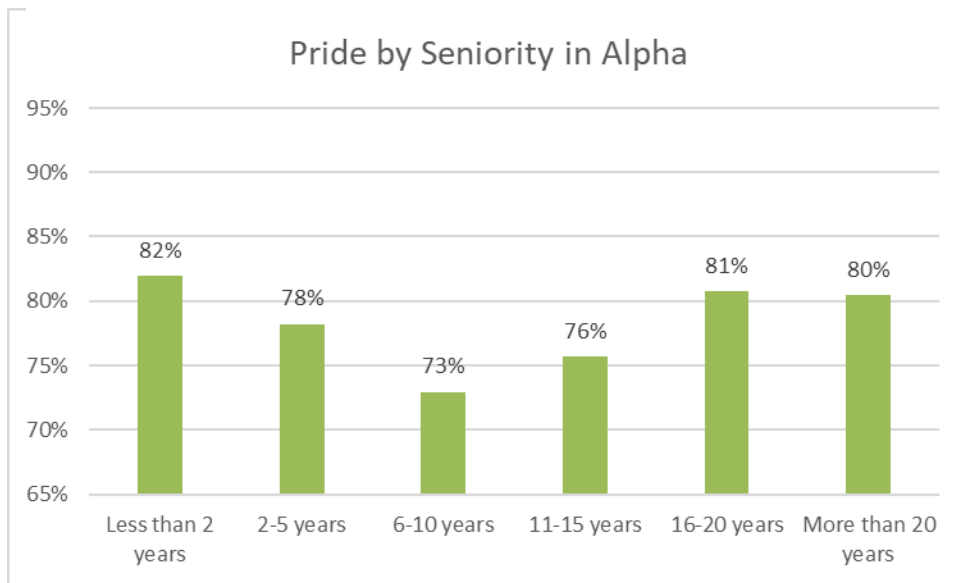
Table 8 Source: Elaboration from dataset



As it has been shown in the dataset description, the sampled population of *Alpha* is mainly concentrated in the older age groups. Just about 14% of the employees is less than 35 years old and, in total, only 0.56% is less than 25 years old. Nonetheless the youngest age group reveals itself as the most enthusiastically proud of their work, with a 92% average score. Still, because of the very limited number of employees belonging to this group, this result may not be entirely trustworthy only relying on the sole age; the effects of other components, like the organizational ones that have been exposed before, may be somewhat influencing the data. The remaining results can, instead, be considered more robust and less dependent on other variables because of the numerosity of individuals within each subset. In this case there is a practically steady increase of “Pride” along with the age, except for the 35-44 group, whose decrease could, despite all, be negligible due to its little entity.

Bearing in mind which is the specific industry *Alpha* operates in, a possible explanation to that pattern could be that as employees get older, they are also more likely to be in need for medicines and treatments. Thus, they become also customers of the company they work for: in such a way, they are given the chance to share to a higher extent the needs of external clients and, at the same time, they have the opportunity to appreciate more and feel more proud of the impact of what they are doing in *Alpha*. Alternatively, one reason that could be thought of refers to a potential partial coincidence between the individuals with higher corporate seniority and older age: therefore, such behaviour of the “Pride” variable could be due to other considerations that will be explored and further discussed in the comment to the next graph, that presents the distribution of the mean score by corporate seniority.

Table 9 Source: Elaboration from dataset



The “Pride” variable is characterized by a U-shaped distribution along the axis standing for the corporate seniority. All the seniority groups have an average “Pride” falling within a narrow interval of values, between 76% and 82%. The only exception is embodied by the 6-10 years seniority, which shows a slightly lower score amounting to 73%, whereas the highest results are placed at the two extremes of the distribution. Even though the lower percentages obtained by the 6-10 years seniority group shouldn’t be an alarming signal, it is necessary to remark that this group of employees is the less represented one in absolute numbers: in fact, it constitutes 6% of the sample. Thus, perhaps also in this situation similarly to what commented for the chronological age graph, the effect of some other organizational factor may be deemed to be driving the mean to its current value.

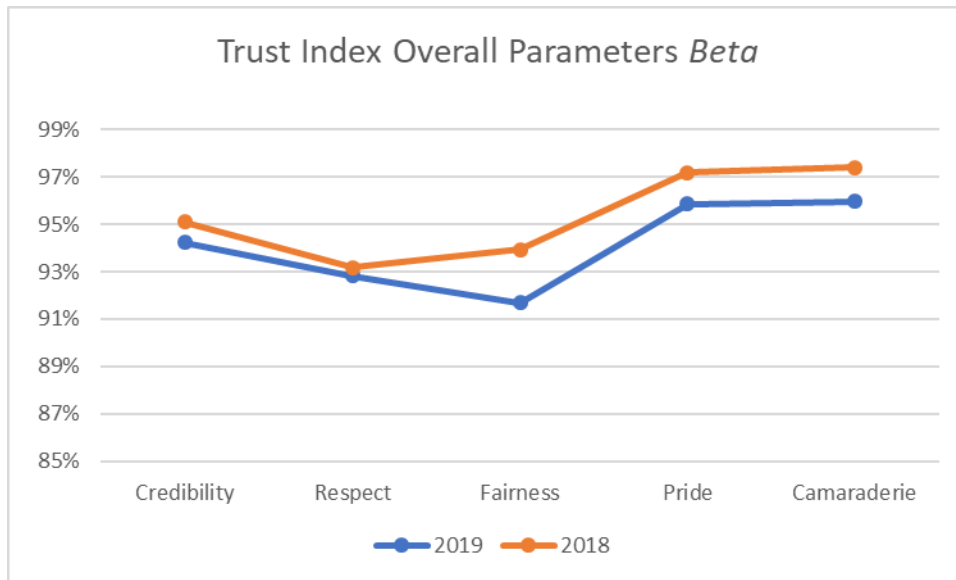
Lastly, among the other individual characteristics, like gender or contractual situation, no one else gives evidence of any impact on the level of “Pride”.

Table 10 Source: Elaboration from dataset

Additional Filters	Pride
Women	79,26%
Men	79,04%
Fixed Term Contract	79,13%
Permanent Contract	79,14%

Descriptive analytics of company *Beta*

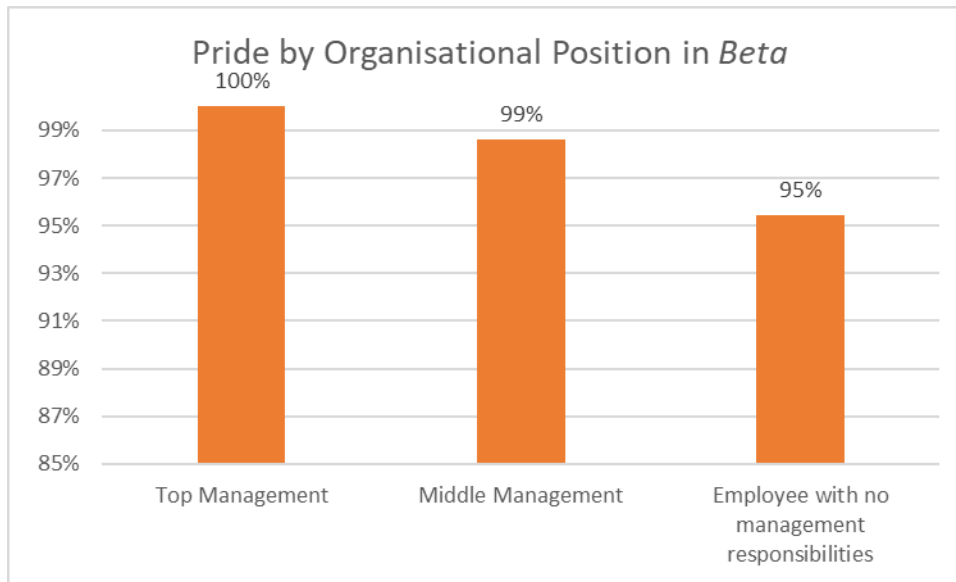
Table 11 Source: Elaboration from dataset



The Trust Index© profile of company Beta in the last two fiscal years is visible in the graph above. The number of respondents in 2019 has increased of 2 units with respect to 2018. The overall score for each measure of the model remained stable, with a very moderate shift downwards, mainly in the “Fairness” parameters. The shape of this profile is indeed very similar to the one of *Alpha*, just flatter and upwards shifted. In both cases “Pride” is perceived as one of the main organizational strengths, in the *Beta* context almost ex-aequo with the sense of “Camaraderie” with approximately a 96% score in the survey. Such situation could be a clue of some common patterns and relations among the 5 parameters, that will later be further analysed in the inferential statistic section of the research.

The descriptive analytics of *Beta*, as in the presentation of *Alpha*, will proceed from looking at organizational filters first and the demographic ones in the successive moment.

Table 12 Source: Elaboration from dataset

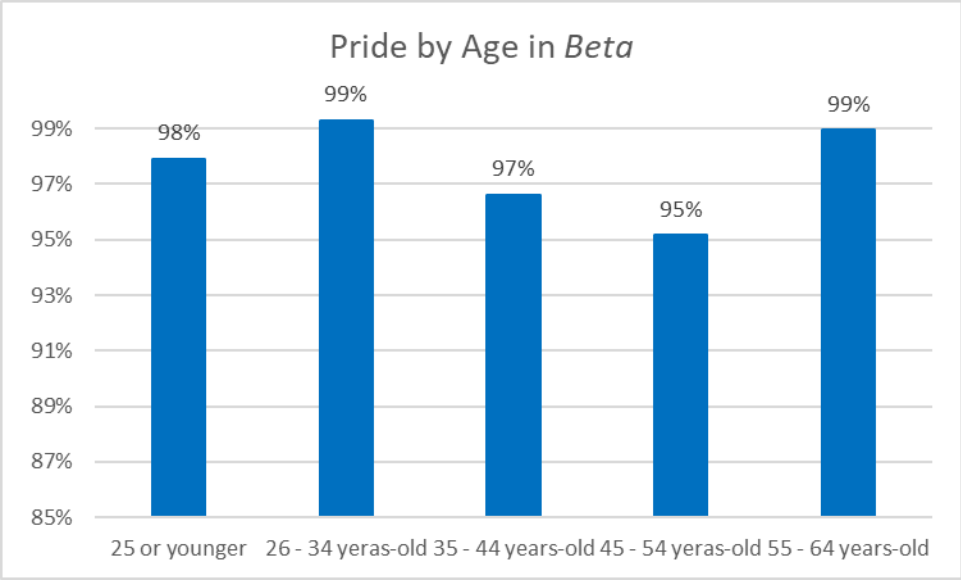


Looking at the organizational filters, the data in the dataset of *Beta* allow to consider separate subsets of the corporate sample sorted by the attributed degree of responsibilities, in other words, according to the hierarchy in place. The scenario is analogous to the one previously observed in *Alpha*. In fact, the average “Pride” registered among the employees follows a descending order from the top managerial positions to the lower levels of the company. In this case, though, the total gap between the parameter measured at the two extremes of the categories under inspection consists of only few percentage points, precisely 5. Peculiar to notice that the largest gap in the distribution of the mean values rests between middle management and the group formed by employees with no managerial responsibilities; *Alpha* was, instead, characterized by the reverse circumstance.

So, in giving the general interpretation to this graph, the following can be stated. Despite the descending tendency is confirmed in both the companies studied, the ways in which it develops itself are slightly different. More in specific, in *Beta* there is almost a neglectable distance in terms of perceived “Pride”, thus sense of

purpose, between the managerial levels; a little more remarkable in entity, on the contrary, the difference with respect to the other workers. It is, therefore, plausible to assume that in *Beta* the hierarchy is flatter at the highest levels and it can be guessed also with respect to shared responsibility and decision-making. Nonetheless, these moderate differences and peculiarities which have been explained need the proper contextualization; indeed, the company has an extremely positive cultural and organizational profile recognized by almost the totality of its workers, whose pride and sense of mission in the job they do reaches astonishing peaks.

Table 13 Source: Elaboration from dataset

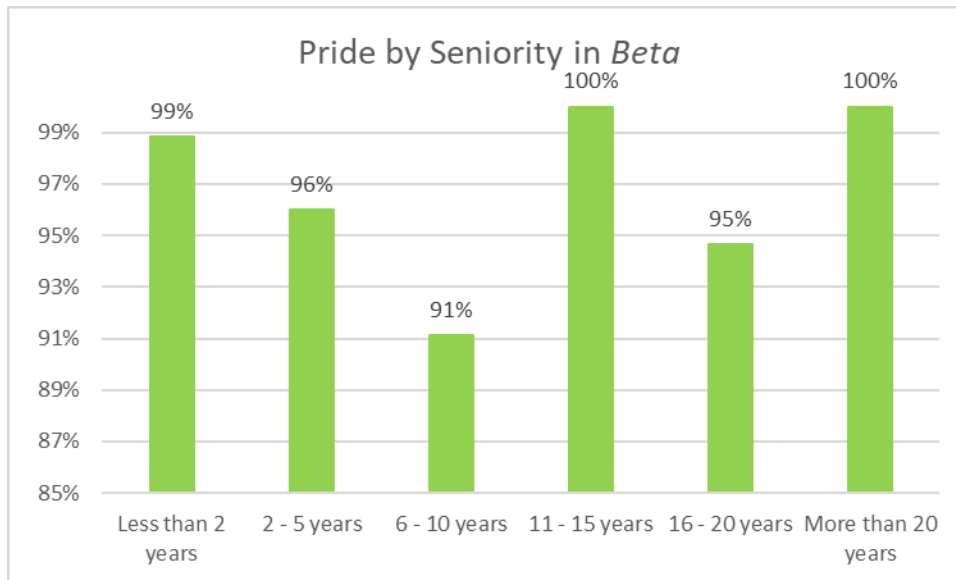


The first filter related to individual characteristics is the one of chronological age. The distribution of the mean scores of the “Pride” variable has an unusual shape, it vaguely reminds of a sinusoid. Two maxima are spotted in correspondence of the 26-34 years old group and 55-64 one. The minimum instead lies in-between, it is the average parameter measure in the subset of the population made up by employees whose age ranges between 45-54. It is appropriate to read the graph in light of the chronological age distribution shown in the dataset description section of

the research. Leaving aside the first age group, workers that are 25 years old or younger, also due to its relative weight, all the other members of the organization can be included in the remaining classes in such a way that a normal-resembling distribution takes form. Coherently, the two median groups are the ones representing the most conspicuous number of workers, more than half of the whole sample. It is peculiar that precisely those two subsets of the *Beta* sample present slightly lower “Pride” levels, and ultimately, their results are those which drag down the overall mean of this cultural parameter to the final 96%, as illustrated when commenting the Trust Index© Profile of *Beta*.

The figure may be commented supposing that exist two categories of employees who, for different reasons, feel their purpose to be more in line with the organizational one. The first of these groups is the one consisting of younger workers who may feel very enthusiastic about their job in a forward-perspective way: they have a vision of how their contribution to the company may be in the future, they may feel as the next main actors in crafting the company purpose according to their aspirations. On the other side, at the same time the older generations share a noticeable sense of pride and purpose in relation to their job within the organization. This group of professional, instead, may be proving these perceptions and feeling in a past-perspective way. They have been part of the organization of *Beta* for a long time, they have seen its evolution and contributed each one in his or her way. Maybe a sort of parenthood relationship has grown up and they can see in a more holistic way the results their efforts were directed to in the previous years. These factors, thus, may reinforce the sense of purpose they perceive and its alignment with company *Beta*. The remaining workers, which for chronological age are excluded by both the above subsets of the sample, will instead present a slightly lower, however still extremely positive, mean score of the “Pride” parameter.

Table 14 Source: Elaboration from dataset



Also, the distribution of the average “Pride” score depending on the corporate seniority group of belonging must be looked at with special care and referring to the features of the seniority distribution of the employees in *Beta*. The graph shows two different trends, which would allow to split it in two parts. There is a monotonic decreasing distribution of the mean result of the “Pride” parameters, which entails a local maximum for workers with the lowest corporate seniority and a minimum for workers with a medium level of seniority, which falls between 5 and 10 years a period. It is necessary to remark that most of the respondents to the survey, considering relative terms, has been working in *Beta* for a period ranging between 2-5 years, the second largest group gathers those which have amounted less than 2 years of experience in the company, and the third one assembles the workers with 6-10 years of seniority. Thus, this first trend has an impact on slightly more than two thirds of the members of the organization. The last trend affecting the sample of the population seems to appear once the professionals in *Beta* reach and pass the threshold consisting in 10 years of corporate seniority. In fact, there is a quick rise of the perceived “Pride”. Despite a small inflection of the average score measured in the group 16-20 years of seniority, which may be due to other factors, the “Pride”

declared by the employees keeps on maintaining at very high levels for all subsequent categories of workers until retirement or the exit from *Beta*.

The interpretation of this peculiar situation is very much in line with the one behind the “Pride” distribution according to age. It can be deemed, perhaps, to be evidence of a mutual confirmation. Employees who are fresh to the organization may figure their purpose in terms of what they will achieve with the organization in the future: having such point of view, the two elements, the individual and the organizational one, tend to be strictly aligned. At the same time those who have spent an already significant period of their professional career in company *Beta* may have gone through a process of redefinition of their purpose and of the organizational one, which may have reciprocally influenced each other. Consequently, their “Pride” and, therefore, sense of purpose will be higher than the average in the corporate population.

To conclude the descriptive analytics section of “Pride” in *Beta*, it is worth mentioning that no one of the other filters related to personal characteristics of the individuals working in the company seems to produce a substantial effect when applied to find potential behaviour of the variable under investigation.

Table 15 Source: Elaboration from dataset

Additional Filters	Pride
Women	95,51%
Men	97,21%
Fixed Term Contract	95,00%
Permanent Contract	95,90%

Predictive analytics

Hypotheses setting

The goal of this chapter is to answer to the third research question of the paper, by discovering what are the relationships between the organizational variables that compose the Trust Index© and determining which are the leverages, and what is their expected magnitude, that the companies under investigation can use to improve the extent of the purpose of their employees. In order to do so, some specific relevant hypotheses will be formulated and tested accordingly. As elucidated in the previous chapter, the variable of the dataset which fits the most with the notion of purpose is “Pride”; as a natural consequence the following hypotheses will have such variable as the dependent one.

Hypothesis 1: The organizational culture variables measured in the sample manifest a positive relationship with the variable “Pride”

Hypothesis 1a: The organizational culture elements which are embodied in the variable “Credibility” have a positive relationship with the variable “Pride”.

Hypothesis 1b: The organizational culture elements which are embodied in the variable “Respect” have a positive relationship with the variable “Pride”.

Hypothesis 1c: The organizational culture elements which are embodied in the variable “Fairness” have a positive relationship with the variable “Pride”.

Hypothesis 1d: The organizational culture elements which are embodied in the variable “Camaraderie” have a positive relationship with the variable “Pride”.

Hypothesis 2: Two or more organizational culture variables simultaneously concur, without overlapping or mutual contrasting relationship, as independent variables to the determination of the variable “Pride”.

Hypothesis 2a: Two or more organizational culture variables simultaneously concur, without overlapping or mutual contrasting relationship, as independent variables to the determination of the variable “Pride” in company *Alpha*.

Hypothesis 2b: Two or more organizational culture variables simultaneously concur, without overlapping or mutual contrasting relationship, as independent variables to the determination of the variable “Pride” in company *Beta*.

First hypothesis testing

The tools that have been chosen to test the first hypothesis are the correlation coefficients between the variables of the sample collecting all the observations, both from the employees of company *Alpha* and from those of company *Beta*. The following graphs represent the resulting correlation matrices, between the variable “Pride” and each one of the other variables under investigation.

Table 19 Source: Elaboration from dataset

	<i>Credibility</i>	<i>Pride</i>
Credibility	1	
Pride	0,847137843	1

Table 18 Source: Elaboration from dataset

	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Pride</i>
Respect	1	
Pride	0,841930138	1

Table 17 Source: Elaboration from dataset

	<i>Fairness</i>	<i>Pride</i>
Fairness	1	
Pride	0,827224748	1

Table 16 Source: Elaboration from dataset

	<i>Camaraderie</i>	<i>Pride</i>
Camaraderie	1	
Pride	0,873367688	1

It can be noticed that all the correlation coefficients are characterized by positive values. Furthermore, their entity is rather conspicuous: each one falls in the range between 80% and 90%. This means that all the variables which are useful to analyse and render a picture of the corporate culture within the organizations of *Alpha* and *Beta* exhibit a considerable direct positive relationship with the sense of purpose declared by the employees.

More in detail, the variable that shows the highest correlation coefficient is “Camaraderie”, reaching the noticeable threshold of 87.34%. According to the Trust Index© methodology, it is appropriate to remark that such measure embodies all those aspects of organizational culture referring to team spirit among the colleagues, as well as their mutual support in the enhancement of a nice and healthy workplace to live in. Both “Credibility” and “Respect” have correlation coefficients between 84% and 85%: also in this case it is useful to remind that the first one, “Credibility”, mainly relates to the perceived coherency that the people with

managerial responsibilities transmit to their colleagues in terms of statements, policies and concrete actions. The second one, "Respect", concerns mostly the work conditions, both depending on human behaviours and other more structural elements, and what is their degree of fit with the needs of the employees. Finally, "Fairness" presents a positive correlation with "Pride" whose coefficients assume the value of almost 83%. This last variable summarizes how the corporate benefit realizations are shared with the population of employees; therefore, it measures the perceived satisfaction with the treatment and compensations, whatever the type, they can enjoy within the organizations they belong to.

Considering such evidence, the hypothesis 1, and all its sub-hypotheses, can be deemed to be successfully proved.

Second hypothesis testing

To test the last hypothesis several models of inferential statistics will be used, more precisely multiple linear regression models, which aim at establishing the degree to which a resulting dependent variable, "Pride", can be interpreted in relation to other independent variables which play a role in its determination. It is appropriate to remark that this kind of analysis bases on past data, thus it could be deemed to be ex post; thus, the exposed relationship may not have relationship with future data. However, the stability of the Trust Index© methodology would assure consistency and generality of the model also outside the sample of this research. Each of the three models elaborated presents the same variables, the difference lies in the criterion of selection of the observations. They are, in fact, analysed separately, according to their belonging to either company *Alpha* or *Beta*. The independent variables considered were "Credibility", "Respect", "Fairness", "Camaraderie".

Table 20 Source: Elaboration from dataset

Company *ALPHA*

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0,883005103
R Squared	0,779698012
Adjusted R Square	0,779340669
Standard Error	7,904439192
Observations	2471

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	4	545309,6828	136327,4207	2181,9314	0
Residual	2466	154076,072	62,48015894		
Total	2470	699385,7548			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	20,14039997	0,687530142	29,29384291	3,9634E-162	18,79220394	21,48859601
Credibility	0,188674201	0,024279056	7,771068075	1,13328E-14	0,141064757	0,236283645
Respect	0,087987699	0,027010011	3,257595801	0,001138846	0,035023054	0,140952344
Fairness	0,06961725	0,02126249	3,27418143	0,001074335	0,027923071	0,11131143
Camaraderie	0,466199567	0,021930158	21,25837688	3,17826E-92	0,42319614	0,509202994

The model that considers the observations drawn from company *Alpha* is characterized by an R squared, also known as the goodness of fit indicator in regressions, at a value of 77.97%. The R squared adjusted according to the number of variables, which is more significative in the case of multiple linear regressions, amounts to 77.93%, highlighting just a small decrease after the correction. This piece of evidence can be regarded as a good overall evaluation of the model, which is able to capture and explain roughly the 80% of the total variance. This first conclusion of high reliability of the model can be confirmed also after looking and examining the other features shown. In fact, the F test gives back positive results, allowing to refute its null hypothesis that there is at least one of the independent variables linearly correlated with another, going instead in favour of the hypothesis that those variables are not linearly correlated among each other. When it comes to the analysis of each variable, it can be noticed that all the t Test show satisfying results. All the p-values are very low, which attest they are able to stand above a

95% level of significance, the coefficients behave accordingly. More in detail, it can be observed that the independent variable which has the highest impact on “Pride” is “Camaraderie”. Each extra percentage point in the “Camaraderie” level assessed by each employee can be translated in almost a half percentage point more on the declared “Pride”. The second most impactful variable is “Credibility”, whose estimated coefficient may be interpreted in the following way: each percentage point in the measure of “Credibility” can be translated into almost a fifth of a point more in the determination of the “Pride” variable.

The intercept, whose estimated coefficient is as well statistically significant, is worth of a special focus and interpretation. Indeed, it represents the score of the variable “Pride” and, for the reasons expressed before, also the parameter of sense of purpose in the remote case in which all the other internal culture variables are characterized by null evaluations by the employees of *Alpha*. In other words, in absence of perceived credibility, respect, fairness and sense of camaraderie, still the sense of purpose of employees could be determined to have a positive, despite sensibly lower, value amounting to roughly 20%. The explanation to this apparently odd outcome is instead very consistent with the theoretical contributions outlined when trying to discover the current definitions of purpose. Part of the value of the sense of purpose may depend on the envisaged effect of the corporate actions with respect to the external world, outside the boundaries of internal practices and regardless of the methods that are employed to perform them. Thus, the value of the intercept may be intrinsic in the company, embedding several factors like its business scope, geography and market; it would only be limitedly exposed to variations, at least in the short and middle time horizon, and it could be intended as the standalone level of purpose shared by the employees in a given company.

So, the final equation that is born from this model, helping to determine the score of “Pride” for an employee in *Alpha*, is the following⁶:

$$(a) \text{ Pride} = 20.14 + 0.19 (\text{Credibility}) + 0.09 (\text{Respect}) + 0.07 (\text{Fairness}) + 0.47 (\text{Camaraderie})$$

Proceeding with the comparison between the two corporate datasets, now will be illustrated and commented the results of the parallel analysis performed considering the sample of employees of *Beta*.

Table 21 Source: Elaboration from dataset

Company *BETA*

Regression Statistics						
Multiple R	0,893206696					
R Squared	0,797818202					
Adjusted R Square	0,790785792					
Standard Error	3,551025421					
Observations	120					

ANOVA						
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>	
Regression	4	5722,256076	1430,564019	113,4487552	5,63774E-39	
Residual	115	1450,124877	12,60978154			
Total	119	7172,380952				

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	12,25941055	4,110067772	2,982775767	0,003488353	4,118157315	20,40066379
Credibility	0,252596434	0,077807847	3,246413344	0,001531394	0,098474063	0,406718805
Respect	0,059658245	0,095449774	0,625022377	0,533194604	-0,129409387	0,248725877
Fairness	-0,07110494	0,102298869	-0,695070639	0,488413084	-0,273739312	0,131529431
Camaraderie	0,634641058	0,102641671	6,183074112	9,8712E-09	0,431327662	0,837954453

The R squared and the adjusted R squared of the multiple linear regression model based on the dataset of *Beta* explain 79% circa of the total variance and the F test is passed too. So, the preliminary information that can be drawn from the analysis are encouraging and depict an overall good model. The p-values of “Credibility” and

⁶ Coefficients are rounded up at the second decimal in the mathematical equations hereafter illustrated.

“Camaraderie” prove to be significant over the 95% threshold and, similarly to the scenario in the model referring to the population of *Alpha*, these two variables are those that impact the most on the estimation of the score of “Pride”. “Camaraderie” has still got the highest influence and both the coefficients increased in their entity. However, the performance in the model of the other two variables set as independent ones, which are “Respect” and Fairness”, is poor; Their p-values cannot guarantee statistical significance at the 95% level, this is noticeable also by their confidence intervals which, in both cases, cross the zero value, thus spanning from negative to positive values.

Therefore, it may be concluded that those two variables are responsible for some multicollinearity problems in the model and a possible counterproof could be spotted in the modelling of a second multiple linear regression on the dataset of *Beta*; for this attempt the statistically non-significant variables will be dropped, only “Credibility” and “Camaraderie” will be kept as independent variables to be controlled.

Table 22 Source: Elaboration from dataset

Company *BETA*

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0,892579685
R Squared	0,796698494
Adjusted R Square	0,793223254
Standard Error	3,5302791
Observations	120

ANOVA

	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	2	5714,225101	2857,11255	229,2499585	3,35912E-41
Residual	117	1458,155852	12,46287053		
Total	119	7172,380952			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>
Intercept	11,82688812	3,994942338	2,960465287	0,003719759	3,915114155	19,73866208
Credibility	0,242818806	0,061948163	3,919709546	0,00014979	0,120133715	0,365503897
Camaraderie	0,637358518	0,074553313	8,549030158	5,48425E-14	0,489709589	0,785007446

The R squared and the adjusted R squared maintain their magnitude, around 79%. As expected, due to the reduction of variables, the latter slightly increases approaching to the standard R squared. So, the second model confirms, despite the changes in the number of explicative variables, its ability to capture almost 80% of the total variance as the previous one and gives first hints that the multicollinearity problems may have been cast away altogether with the accountable variables. The F test can also be checked and shown to be successfully passed with a higher extent of significance. The two independent variables chosen are statistically highly significant, much above the 95% threshold. Both the coefficients are just slightly adjusted in terms of their entity with respect to the values they assumed in the previous model. However, the interval of confidence has a much narrower range: this is an important element that testifies the higher reliability and precision of this second model. The interpretation of the coefficient assigned to “Camaraderie”, in terms of its role in the inference, is the following: each additional point in such score produces roughly two thirds point more in the “Pride” value for an employee of *Beta*. Analogously, each additional unit in the “Credibility” assessment by an employee has an influence of one quarter extra unit for the “Pride” variable determination.

The coefficient of the intercept reaches the value 11.83 and it is still statistically significant. As in the case of the model of Alpha, the concept behind this estimation could be the level of shared purpose among the employees of *Beta* under the circumstances that all the independent variables reflecting organizational values and culture have null scores. Therefore, the intercept may be intended as the degree to which the external side of the purpose counts for the internal stakeholders like the employees, that is the drive coming from the mere firm-specific impact on the world without considerations about the internal modus operandi and culture.

The equation that emerges by this model built on the data of the employees of *Beta* can be expressed as it follows:

$$(b) \text{ Pride} = 11.83 + 0.24 (\text{Credibility}) + 0.64 (\text{Camaraderie})$$

When comparing the two models which base on the data of *Alpha* and *Beta* certain aspects should be remarked. First, they have both excellent and similar performances in terms of proportion of variance explained. Despite the differences of the two companies, in terms of geographical location and size of corporate population, the results show consistency towards the acceptance of the hypothesis that two or more organizational variables may be deemed as predictors of the purpose of the employees. It is furthermore interesting that the order of importance of the impact, measured according to the values of the coefficients, remains the same in *Alpha* and *Beta*, ranking “Camaraderie” as the first one in relative weight and “Credibility” as the second one.

This piece of evidence suggests a possible generalization of the descending theoretical implications, at least in the panorama of the companies working in the pharmaceutical industry in Europe. Further research may be needed to extend the broadening of such generalization to organizations belonging to other economic sectors and to other areas of the world.

A first discrepancy between the two multiple linear regressions lies in the variation of magnitude of the coefficients: such variation is lower for the “Credibility” one, roughly 0.05 in absolute terms, higher for the “Camaraderie” one, 0.17 circa. In each occurrence the variation implies a lower coefficient for the model referring to company *Alpha*, consequently the wideness of the gap between the impact of the first two variables remains almost stable in the two cases, between 0.28 and 0.40 in absolute numbers. The second differentiating factor between the two models should be noted in the intercept and its value. The intercept of the regression for *Beta* is estimated to be roughly the half of the one appeared from the analysis concerning the employees of *Alpha*. Along with this merely quantitative conclusion, the interpretation of the intercept requires a comparative perspective. Indeed, it seems that the external dimensions in the developing of an organizational purpose represent a minor relative leverage for the employees of *Beta* with respect to those

of *Alpha*. Last, and perhaps, more evident dissimilarity between the two models consists in the setting, more precisely in the independent variables. For the multiple linear regression of *Alpha*, beyond the two variables in common with the *Beta* one, two additional independent variables, “Fairness” and “Respect”, were analysed and proved to be statistically significant above the 95% level, therefore without highlighting multicollinearity issues. As it has been shown, this situation was not analogous for the predictive analysis of the sample of *Beta*.

Further research should be undertaken to better observe if such differences may be due to the corporate population size, to the business model or location, including their history, or to other factors which have not been mentioned.

After having thoroughly described the features and performance of the two multiple linear regressions, along with their commonalities and differences, it can be concluded that also the second hypothesis, and its sub-hypotheses, have been successfully tested.

Corporate strategies and actions towards the purpose of the employees

This chapter of the research will depart from the results of the empirical sections and will proceed inductively to respond qualitatively to the last research question, concerning the most impacting strategies and practices that could be implemented to positively affect those cultural variables which have an higher influence on the individuals’ sense of purpose.

The predictive analytics and the multiple linear regressions modelled in the previous section generated valid conclusions about the organizational variables, in the realm of corporate culture, which can be seen as useful factors to forecast the level of

purpose of the employees. Therefore, it is also of the utmost importance, to investigate in the first instance the theoretical contributions of authors that studied the behaviour of these specific measures, in other research contexts and also with different aims, in order to read them with the new perspective lens linked to the role of such elements in the formation of a purpose for the individuals. Afterwards, the related strategies and practices currently applied by *Alpha* and *Beta* will be discussed and presented in a comparative manner. Despite a direct link of such strategies and practices to the purpose of individuals hasn't been measured, they represent elements of corporate culture responding to those variables which have been proven to be predictors of high levels of purpose for the employees: thus, an indirect connection is established and it is worthwhile to investigate it.

The first element to consider from the inference made possible by the empirical models is that aspects connected to "Camaraderie" and sense of cohesion across the corporate population end up having a positive impact on the individuals' purpose definition. An established taxonomy for the studies of organizational culture and environment was defined by academics in the eighties (Wallach, 1983) and it identified three cultural dimensions whose labels possess a very self-explanatory character, in terms of attitudes and behaviours adopted: they are the bureaucratic, the innovative and the supportive cultural dimensions. Departing from this landscape, in the nineties certain scholars tried to test and link the characteristics of such organizational cultural dimensions with several factors, among which team cohesion (Odom, Boxx, & Dunn, 1990). Team cohesion, element to which camaraderie may be reconducted to, was proven to be enhanced by work environments sharing highly developed innovative and supportive dimensions of organizational culture. So, according to the features of the two attributes, what favours team cohesion may be found in a people-oriented and creative workplace, that cares about the social and psychological well-being of its members. At the same time, it endorses the critical forward-looking thinking and the ability to resort to several stimuli to produce unconventional outputs, also with a certain tolerance for

mistakes as they constitute part of the developing process. The correlation between team creativity, learning culture and cohesion was indeed confirmed by more recent research (Joo, Song, Lim, & Yoon, 2012). In addition, several components and drivers of team cohesion have been analysed by scholars throughout the years in the literature (Janssen & Xu, 2008; Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau, & Zhang, 2012); there are cognitive drivers, which may reflect either the awareness of belonging to a certain group or the degree of perceived similarity with the other members; there are relational drivers, such as the trust in the behaviour of colleagues and their respect of the social norms in place; there are also economic drivers, such as the estimation of the value, present and future, that the presence in a specific team brings to the individual, not necessarily in pecuniary terms.

The other main piece of evidence coming from the analysis testifies that the credibility of people in charge at all hierarchical levels represents another crucial key for a higher purpose of employees within the corporate environment. An interesting contribution, to better understand how the issue has been otherwise observed, comes from studies on leadership (Posner & Kouzes, 1988). Such study is extremely useful to give a taxonomy of the building blocks which concur in the assessment of credibility by the employees. They are trustworthiness, so the possibility to rely on the manager and his commitment to make actions follow; expertise of the business under discussion is the second necessary attribute for credibility; dynamism, thus the ability to spot changes and adapt accordingly and consistently represents the third one. The research also demonstrates that exists a connection between these factors behind credibility and those which are used to categorize leaders, such as the ability to inspire or to support people around them.

The initiatives that make the samples of the *Alpha* and *Beta* corporate populations so proud about their companies and with a vivid purpose do indeed have features which are very consistent with the findings of the analysis and with the theoretical implications so far offered to the discussion. It naturally descends that they may

constitute a useful example for practitioners as well as for researchers to take inspiration from in order to address the issue of anomia and lead the organizational change towards individuals' purpose through the leverage of the highlighted cultural variables. Such strategies and practices, for maintaining the anonymity in the treatment of the data, will be illustrated in reference to certain policy categories and principles they originated from, not the fully detailed and final execution in which they manifested themselves.

The very first impact of the company and its culture to a new employee is kept under high consideration, therefore the welcoming processes are well-designed and performed. Indeed, this is the right occasion to give the new entrants, along with the information that are relevant for their future tasks, the detailed picture of the company they will start to work for, both the history and the objectives or aspirations. At the same time, it is appropriate to highlight that these sorts of introduction programs are not set up as a path only for the hired individual to follow, neither as a unidirectional teaching and transmission of knowledge. These activities do, instead, constitute a valid opportunity to involve all the community of the senior workers as it could lead to two potential distinguished and desired outcomes: the first one is to build a cooperative, even friendly, relationship with the newcomers; the second one, consists in motivating the team once more. This result may occur both by reminding the senior members of the organization, including the top managers, of the overarching goals the company is striving to achieve, and by an higher focus on corporate culture and values which are there conveyed to the fresh colleagues.

It seems that creating room for dialogue is a major guiding principle adopted by companies like *Alpha* and *Beta* when designing practices to inspire the members of the organization. By doing so, they can effectively increase both the credibility of those who bear higher responsibilities and the cohesion between the employees. The way they achieve such results depends considerably on the setting and the

structural features of the dialogue that is envisaged. Two main requirements seem to have predominantly influenced the decisions in designing a variety of initiatives which may be deemed to be performed with communicative purposes. The first one refers to the type of communication, which is independent from organizational structure and hierarchy in place: the right to express ideas, suggest strategies to overcome certain difficulties and possible goals is transversal within these organizations. There are also dedicated teams and internal garrisons which are established to foster such opportunity and encourage the enhancement of these activities. The second main requirement that can be typically encountered is the one of frequency: the occasions for the employees to speak and listen, to propose and discuss, respect very precise schedules and they are characterized by high levels of frequency. It is also interesting to notice that this aspect may have been more accentuated lately as a result of the establishments of new infrastructures on which the dialogue takes place. The main example is the one of internal social platforms, which is one of the elements that has also been spotted by Ismail (2014) as a common tool used by exponential organizations.

The last category of activities is mainly aimed at improving with a direct effect the camaraderie and cohesion among colleagues who work for the organizations analysed in the research. Precisely in this case, more than in the previous ones, there can be found a further level of commonality between the actions of *Alpha* and *Beta*, not only in terms of principles and guidelines but also in the very development of these practices. Internal associative organizations are very frequent, employees who share certain interests and passions, typically in the sport sphere or in the cultural one, gather altogether to enjoy them collectively. Similarly, the companies may organize courses and laboratories for the employees to broaden their knowledge or let them experiment something outside the scope of the corporate business. Groups of volunteering are very popular too and may have the positive side-effect of creating tighter bonds among those who share these experiences. Another identified practice consists in recognizing the importance of celebrating

together for relevant occasions: therefore, not only national holidays are celebrated but there are also dates which may have a special meaning for the individuals or for the whole organization and its sub-groups, opening up these events also to the participation of the larger community of external stakeholders.

Final remarks and further research to be conducted

The research tried to analyse an issue, the one of anomia and of the roots of purpose of individuals within organizations by observing which are the perspectives and tools that have been suggested and adopted. Advantages and disadvantages were pointed out of several of them. The organizational culture and its important impact on the determination of a purpose for the individuals was confirmed and explored, theoretically and with statistical analysis thanks to the dataset offered by GreatPlacesToWork® which allowed for a comparison of two case studies of companies in the same industry, the pharmaceutical business, one located in Italy and the other in Denmark.

The analysis of the relevant literature allowed the understanding of the evolution of the concept of purpose, answering to the first research question. It appears that the importance of such theme may be measured with respect to its two main components, one is external strategic and the other is internal cultural. The strategic role of the purpose has been mainly examined as an inspirational one by literature on mission statements and, more recently, by new schools of thought that reconsider the definition of purpose under new lens, such as the ones of sustainability or of disruptive innovation. The cultural aspects refer to the influence internal organization and corporate culture variables assume in favouring or

hindering the sense of purpose of employees by the means of social norms in place and their grade of acceptance.

Responding to the second research question, the following can be said. Descriptive analytics elaborate a general picture about the distribution of purpose of individuals within the two-case studies samples, according to demographic and organizational filters. In general, the individuals' sense of purpose is more present in employees with higher managerial responsibilities and at the extreme opposites of the age and seniority distributions. Gender and contractual situation parameters do not present significant effects on the levels of purpose within the samples.

The predictive analytics were useful in tackling the third research question, concerning the impact of the corporate culture of an organization in the determination of individual purposes of employees: the empirical testing shows the common importance of variables regarding organizational culture aspects as explanatory predictors of the purpose of the employees. Indeed, some of the organizational culture related variables, in particular "Credibility" and "Camaraderie", have a higher statistically significant influence within both the samples of the population of the two companies analysed, *Alpha* and *Beta*.

With respect to the fourth research question, about the organizational features and strategies may a firm put in place in order to improve the sense of purpose of its employees, the following may be concluded. From a strategic perspective, it should be encouraged the engagement on various levels of the population of the employees in a dynamic cross-hierarchical and cross-functional dialogue for the determination of the strategic objectives the organization, and the people who work in it, want to achieve. The dialogue should not only set the start of a path, frequent interactions and updates should be maintained to keep the focus on the desired outcomes. From a cultural perspective such dialogue should set the ground also for a shared moral vision and values; furthermore, initiatives and practices leveraging on the high impact variables mentioned before, which are "Credibility" and

“Camaraderie” should be designed and supported. Such activities could span from interactive welcoming programs for new employees to internal groups of volunteering, cultural and sportive associations, special moments of celebration.

Alternative approaches could have been used when addressing the problem of anomia and the purpose definition. For example, some authors studied the issue in the context of alliances and partnership and adopted a negotiation perspective (Eden & Huxham, 2001); such point of view could have been replicated to observe those specific episodes in the bargaining activity between groups of individuals within the same organization in order to find the ones are more critical to develop a sense of purpose.

Further research could observe to what extent the highlighted factors may be generalized or may change their effects on the purpose projection in relation to other exogenous variables: for instance, the size of the corporate population, time, geography and industry of activity. In addition, it could be studied and measured with quantitative research the precise magnitude of the impact of practices like the ones presented in the discussion onto the assessment of the cultural variables and, consequently, on the purpose of the individuals.

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