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Commitment to sustainability in supplier companies in the mining sector: analysis of corporate missions in San Juan, Argentina

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Abstract. This study examines how supplier companies in the mining sector in San Juan, Argentina, integrate sustainability principles into their corporate missions, using discourse analysis as the main methodology. Through a sample of 29 companies with active websites, patterns and trends were identified in the representation of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The findings reveal a marked predominance of the economic dimension, reflected in 100% of the analyzed missions, while the social and environmental dimensions are present in 44.83% and 34.48% of cases, respectively. This imbalance suggests a partial view of sustainability, which could limit the positive impact of these companies on their communities and the natural environment. The study highlights the importance of strengthening the integration of the three pillars of sustainability into the communication and operational strategies of supplier companies. Furthermore, it underscores the need for awareness programs, training, and regulatory policies that promote responsible practices. This work contributes to academic knowledge by addressing an underexplored aspect in the literature and provides practical recommendations to enhance sustainability in the mining value chain, aligning with global standards such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: *discourse analysis, corporate responsibility, supply chain in mining, triple bottom line, ESG practices*

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a guiding principle for business and policy in the 21st century, requiring organizations to align economic performance with social equity and environmental responsibility (Arias-Valle, Coria Augusto 2024). This integrated approach – commonly framed by the Triple Bottom Line (Elkington 1998) – has gained prominence in sectors with a significant environmental and social impact, such as mining. While the sustainability practices of large mining companies have been widely studied, less attention has been paid to how supplier companies articulate their sustainability commitments, particularly through strategic communication tools like corporate mission statements.

This study seeks to answer the following research question: To what extent do supplier companies

in the mining sector in San Juan, Argentina, reflect sustainability principles – economic, social, and environmental – in their corporate mission statements? By analyzing these statements through the lens of discourse analysis, the study aims to uncover patterns of integration, omission, and prioritization of sustainability dimensions, offering insights into how these actors contribute – or fail to contribute – to the broader goals of sustainable development in extractive industries.

The concept of sustainability is commonly structured around the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), which encompasses the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. This framework, popularized by Elkington (1998), proposes that business success should be evaluated not only by financial performance but also by its impact on society and the environment. The economic dimension emphasizes long-term viability, job creation, and responsible growth (Elkington 1998); the social pillar highlights equity, labour rights, and human well-being (Brundtland 1987); and the environmental dimension calls for the protection of ecosystems and the responsible use of natural resources (Carson 1962). Together, these pillars offer a comprehensive foundation for guiding organizational practices aligned with sustainable development.

Building on this framework, recent scholarship emphasizes the critical role of supplier companies in advancing sustainability across extractive value chains. For instance, Kügerl *et al.* (2025) highlight that responsible sourcing in renewable energy technologies requires moving beyond compliance to build strategic, sustainability-oriented relationships with suppliers – a challenge shared with mining supply chains, particularly in Latin American resource economies. Similarly, Johnstone and Genç (2025) explore how extractive supply chains are increasingly embedded in global environmental discourses, arguing that the adoption of circular economy principles and spatial accountability can mitigate environmental degradation and promote shared sustainability responsibilities among upstream and downstream actors. In urban-industrial logistics systems, Heldt and Pikuleva (2025) identify key sustainability maturity dimensions, including alignment with ESG goals and the need for systemic integration of sustainability practices across organizational networks. Additionally, Smith (2025) examines how extractive industries in Africa navigate geopolitical tensions and legitimacy concerns in the face of global decarbonization, emphasizing the performative role of sustainability discourse in shaping public trust and institutional positioning.

The case of San Juan, while contextually specific, serves as a representative example of broader challenges faced by supplier companies operating within extractive industries globally (Olivares Chicahuala, Arias-Valle 2024). Similar dynamics – such as the predominance of economic concerns, limited engagement with environmental responsibilities, and fragmented integration of sustainability into corporate discourse – have been observed in other resource-rich regions, particularly where institutional frameworks are weak or evolving. For example, Kügerl *et al*. (2025) highlight how renewable energy technology manufacturers in Europe face systemic barriers to responsible sourcing, including limited traceability, complex supply chains, and inconsistent regulatory enforcement – challenges that resonate strongly with supplier firms in emerging economies. Likewise, Smith (2025) shows that despite the global push for decarbonization, structural inequalities and geopolitical pressures often lead to extractive dynamics that marginalize local stakeholders and obscure sustainable development goals, particularly in African mining contexts.

By examining how supplier firms in San Juan articulate their commitment to sustainability, this study sheds light on structural patterns of discourse and strategic orientation that transcend local particularities. Situating this case within ongoing academic debates contributes to a broader understanding of how sustainability is communicated, prioritized, or overlooked by secondary actors in extractive value chains – offering insights relevant to both scholars and practitioners concerned with sustainable development in resource-dependent economies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework: sustainability and corporate mission statements

Sustainability has become a fundamental paradigm in business strategy, integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions. One of the most widely recognized frameworks in this regard is the TBL, introduced by John Elkington (1998) in *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*. This model argues that corporate success should not be measured solely in financial terms but must also account for social and environmental impact.

The foundation of sustainability as a development concept was established in the Brundtland Report (1987), which defines sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987). Building on these principles, scholars such as Rachel Carson (1962) in *Silent Spring* and Herman Daly (1991) with his *steady-state economy* concept have emphasized the urgency of balancing economic activity with ecologi-

cal preservation. Brown (2009) further reinforced this idea through *Plan B 4.0*, advocating for sustainability in energy use and consumption patterns.

In corporate strategy, mission statements serve as essential tools for articulating a company's purpose, values, and long-term vision. Drucker (1954) defined a mission statement as an answer to the fundamental question: "What is our business?" He emphasized that a well-defined mission guides organizational decisions and provides continuity over time. David (2011) further characterized mission statements as declarations of an organization's reason for being, highlighting their role in shaping corporate culture. Kotler, Armstrong (2003) described them as strategic communication tools that consolidate values, establish a corporate identity, and align stakeholders with a shared vision. Similarly, Robbins and Coulter (1995) argued that mission statements clarify an organization's function, differentiate it from competitors, and reinforce its position in the market.

In the mining industry, sustainability principles are typically applied at the level of large extractive companies, which face direct scrutiny regarding their environmental and social impacts. However, supplier and service companies also play a critical role in extending sustainable practices throughout the value chain. Corporate mission statements in these companies provide valuable insights into their sustainability commitments, reflecting how they align with global standards such as the GRI and the SDGs. Despite these expectations, previous studies suggest that economic concerns often dominate mission statements, while social and environmental dimensions receive less emphasis (Eccles *et al.* 2014; Porter, Kramer 2006).

In recent years, research has increasingly addressed how sustainability is incorporated – or omitted – in the discourse of supplier companies operating within extractive industries. Studies such as Kügerl *et al*. (2025) emphasize the institutional and operational barriers suppliers face in adopting responsible sourcing practices, particularly when sustainability demands are driven by global clients rather than local norms. This reflects a structural asymmetry in value chains, where suppliers often internalize sustainability commitments superficially or symbolically, without a deeper organizational change. Similarly, Heldt and Pikuleva (2025) highlight the lack of maturity in ESG integration among supplier networks, suggesting that mission statements often reflect aspirational rather than actionable commitments. These findings are consistent with Smith (2025), who explores how discursive strategies in the extractive sector are used not only to convey corporate values but also to build legitimacy amid growing environmental scrutiny. Taken together, this literature reveals a persistent gap between the formal adoption of sustainability language and its substantive implementation – an issue particularly relevant in supplier contexts where resources, capabilities, and incentives are limited. This study engages critically with these debates by analyzing corporate mission statements as discursive artifacts that both reflect and shape the positioning of supplier firms within the extractive industry's sustainability agenda.

This study contributes to the literature by examining the presence and articulation of sustainability principles in the corporate mission statements of supplier companies within the mining sector. By applying discourse analysis, it evaluates whether these companies effectively integrate sustainability into their strategic narratives and how their commitments compare with global best practices. In order to contextualize this study within ongoing empirical research, the following section reviews recent contributions focused on sustainability practices and communication in extractive industries and their supply chains.

Review of related studies

While foundational studies have addressed the role of corporate mission statements and the evolution of sustainability thinking in organizational contexts, recent literature has begun to explore more specifically how these dynamics unfold in supplier firms embedded in extractive industries. In this context, several contributions have emphasized sustainability integration in corporate strategies, particularly within the mining industry and its value chain. Research by Porter and Kramer (2006) introduced the concept of *shared value*, emphasizing that businesses must align their profitability objectives with positive social and environmental contributions. This perspective is highly relevant to the mining sector, where sustainability commitments can improve corporate legitimacy and stakeholder relations (Fikru *et al.* 2024; Qazi, Al-Mhdawi 2024).

Studies focused on the extractive industry have consistently highlighted the social license to operate (SLO) as a key determinant of long-term business viability (Thomson, Boutilier 2011). Mining companies that fail to address environmental and social concerns often face opposition from local communities, regulatory bodies, and civil society organizations. Jenkins and Yakovleva (2006) found that sustainability reporting among mining companies has increased significantly in response to these pressures, with many firms adopting frameworks such as the GRI Standards to enhance transparency.

In the context of supplier companies, research remains relatively limited (Fatimah *et al.* 2024; Fikru *et al.* 2024). However, studies on supply chain sus-

tainability indicate that downstream companies play a crucial role in extending responsible practices across industries (Gimenez, Tachizawa 2012). Suppliers who align with sustainability standards contribute to broader corporate responsibility efforts, yet they often face fewer regulatory obligations than primary extractive firms (Rajaeifar *et al.* 2022; Sanchez Simonatto *et al.* 2024).

Regarding corporate discourse, Fairclough (2004) emphasizes the power of language in shaping organizational narratives and public perceptions. Their theories on critical discourse analysis (CDA) provide a useful methodological framework for evaluating how supplier companies articulate sustainability commitments in their mission statements.

Despite the growing body of research on sustainability in the mining sector, there is a lack of studies focusing on how supplier companies communicate their role in sustainable development. This study addresses this gap by examining corporate mission statements from supplier firms in the mining industry, assessing the extent to which they integrate sustainability principles in their public discourse.

METHODOLOGY

Context of the study: the mining industry in San Juan, Argentina

San Juan has become a strategic hub for the global mining industry, hosting operations from nine of the world's top 40 mining companies (Fig. 1). The region is particularly significant for copper and gold extraction, attracting large-scale investments from industry leaders.

Fig. 1 Location map of San Juan, Argentina

- BHP Group, the world's largest mining company, is leading investments in San Juan through its Filo del Sol project in Iglesia, marking a crucial part of its international operations.
- Rio Tinto Group, ranked second globally, has invested in the Los Azules project in collaboration with McEwen Copper Inc. and Stellantis, reinforcing its commitment to copper exploration in the region.
- Glencore, the fourth-largest mining company, operates the El Pachón copper and molybdenum deposit in Calingasta, consolidating its presence in San Juan.
- Fortescue Metals Group, ranked seventh, has undertaken exploration projects in Rincones de Araya and other areas of Calingasta.

In the gold sector, Barrick Gold, in partnership with Shandong Gold, operates the Veladero mine, one of the region's primary gold deposits. Meanwhile, copper mining projects include Teck Resources' investment in La Coipita and South32 Ltd's participation in the Chita copper project in Iglesia. Additionally, Lundin Mining Corporation leads the Josemaría project, which has raised significant economic expectations for the province.

These companies not only drive economic development in San Juan but also contribute to technological advancements in mining operations. However, their environmental and social impact has generated increasing scrutiny. To maintain their social license to operate, these firms implement sustainability policies and produce annual reports aligned with international standards such as the GRI and the SDGs (GRI 2021).

Transparency in managing environmental and social impacts is crucial in mining, as extraction activities can deplete scarce natural resources and alter ecosystems (KPMG 2020). Sustainability reports serve as a mechanism for companies to build trust with stakeholders, including local communities, investors, and governmental authorities. By disclosing efforts to minimize environmental damage, promote social development, and enhance working conditions, mining companies can strengthen their industry reputation (Porter, Kramer 2006). Additionally, adopting sustainable practices helps mitigate financial and reputational risks, as regulators and investors increasingly prioritize ESG criteria in performance evaluations (Eccles *et al.* 2014).

Given San Juan's reliance on mining, supplier and service companies in the region are expected to integrate sustainability into their operations. This study examines how these secondary actors address sustainability challenges through their corporate missions, providing insights into their role in fostering a responsible mining industry.

Study design

The methodological framework employed in this study, specifically the use of discourse analysis and the thematic coding approach, has been validated and successfully applied in previous research by Arias-Valle *et al.* (2021a, b). These prior studies confirmed the effectiveness of the analytical model for systematically interpreting corporate sustainability communication, ensuring its reliability for the current analysis.

The data collection and analysis for this research were conducted between October and December 2024. The corporate mission statements from the selected supplier companies were systematically collected from publicly available sources (official company websites) and organized for subsequent content analysis.

The coding process was carried out independently by two researchers with expertise in qualitative analysis and sustainability studies. Any discrepancies identified during this process were resolved through discussion and consensus. This collaborative approach, proven effective in previous research (Arias-Valle *et al.* 2021a, b), ensures reliability and robustness of the analytical categories applied, enhancing the validity and replicability of the results obtained.

This study employs a qualitative approach based on discourse analysis to interpret how supplier companies in the mining sector in San Juan, Argentina, construct and communicate their commitment to sustainability in their corporate missions. This method allows for an exploration of the representation of organizational values, meanings, and priorities in the analysed texts.

Discourse analysis

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis consisted of corporate mission statements published on the official websites of supplier companies in the mining sector. The selection of these statements was based on their relevance as strategic texts that condense the vision, values, and objectives of organizations (Drucker 1984; Kotler, Armstrong 2003).

Sample

- ***Inclusion criteria***: Active supplier companies in San Juan with an official website explicitly publishing their corporate mission.
- ***Sample size***: From an initial population of 104 companies, 29 met the inclusion criteria. While this represents a limited sample, the approach ensures the availability of verifiable public sources.

Analysis process

- ***Pre-analysis phase***:
  The mission statements were collected and organized into a database, maintaining their original format to preserve the contextual nuances of the discourse. Relevant theories and conceptual frameworks on organizational discourse analysis (Fairclough 2004) and sustainability (Elkington 1998) were reviewed to develop preliminary analytical categories.
- ***Content analysis***:
  Content analysis was conducted using the methodology of Huerta-Estévez and Andrade-Estrada (2021), which adopts a category-based approach to interpret texts systematically. This method is particularly suited for examining corporate missions as it facilitates the identification of values and commitments toward sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The technique focuses on detecting keywords and concepts that reflect sustainability principles. This strategy enabled the construction of thematic categories that capture the approach to sustainability within the corporate missions, allowing for coding each mission based on the presence and relevance of these terms research (Arias-Valle *et al.* 2021a, b).

Thematic coding

During the coding and categorization process, the mission statements were classified into categories derived from the literature on sustainability and CSR, with particular emphasis on the mining sector. The main categories include:

1. ***Environment***: References to environmental protection, sustainable practices, and ecological impact reduction.
2. ***Social responsibility and communities***: Focused on community welfare and the company's social contributions.
3. ***Labour welfare and customer satisfaction***: Covering employee well-being, company positioning, and client expectations.

Each mission was assessed in terms of these categories and coded to determine the frequency and prominence of each theme. This process produced a matrix of terms and categories, facilitating the identification of patterns and trends regarding companies' commitments to sustainability (Carroll 1979).

Theoretical categories linked to the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) were identified:

- Social responsibility terms (e.g., community, equity, inclusion).

- Environmental references (e.g., impact, preservation, sustainability).
- Economic language (e.g., efficiency, growth, competitiveness).

The software **Atlas.ti** was used to aid in the segmentation, coding, and analysis of the texts, ensuring a rigorous and systematic interpretation.

Critical discourse analysis

The analysis focused on identifying patterns, contradictions, and significant omissions in the representation of sustainability values within corporate missions. This approach provided insights into how the discourse reflects or marginalizes certain sustainability pillars (Fairclough 2004).

During the results analysis and interpretation phase, the frequencies of each category were calculated, and specific patterns were analysed across different types of services, such as hygiene, safety, or transportation, to explore whether certain supplier sectors demonstrated greater commitment to specific sustainability areas. This comparative analysis allowed for observing the relative presence of each sustainability dimension based on the type of service, offering a comparative perspective of different suppliers' orientations toward sustainable practices (Alvarado-Herrera, Schlesinger-Díaz 2008).

Enhancing the analysis

Contextual validation

To strengthen interpretation, results were compared with strategic discourses from major mining companies operating in San Juan and other regions, highlighting differences and similarities. Additionally, exploratory interviews were conducted with key sector actors, including members of business chambers, community representatives, and sustainability experts.

Incorporation of critical perspectives

The analysis was supplemented with critical theories on sustainability and its discursive representation, considering how language can reinforce or divert genuine commitments to sustainability.

Ethical considerations

The analysis was exclusively based on publicly available sources from the official websites of companies, adhering to ethical principles of transparency and confidentiality. Interviews and contextual consultations were conducted with the explicit consent of participants.

RESULTS

Contextual characterization of supplier companies and digital communication practices

The findings presented in this section align closely with the research question by revealing the extent to which supplier firms in the mining sector incorporate sustainability principles into their corporate mission statements. The patterns observed – namely, the predominance of economic language over social and environmental references – correspond to an imbalanced application of the Triple Bottom Line framework. This confirms that while economic viability is frequently emphasized, social inclusion and environmental responsibility tend to be underrepresented, which reveals a partial integration of the sustainability discourse.

The analysed sample comprised 104 supplier companies providing services to the mining sector in San Juan, Argentina. A clear sectoral concentration was observed, with construction and transportation accounting for 38% of the total. This distribution underscores the strategic role these subsectors play, given the substantial demand for infrastructure development and logistics within the mining industry. Additionally, a segmentation based on the diversity of services revealed that nearly half of the companies (43%) offer multiple service categories, while only 26% provide highly diversified services (more than three categories). This pattern suggests a preference in the sector for specialized but flexible service provision, reflecting the operational complexity and varied needs of mining operations.

The study further revealed that only 51% of the analyzed supplier companies maintain an official digital presence via websites, which limits their opportunities for transparent and effective communication with stakeholders. Even among companies with websites, merely 55% explicitly disclose their corporate mission statements. This relatively low level of explicit communication indicates a missed strategic opportunity, given the increasing importance that clients and stakeholders attribute to transparency and clearly articulated commitments to sustainability. As corporate missions serve not only as a communication tool but also as an indicator of companies' strategic alignment with contemporary sustainability expectations, this gap points to potential areas of improvement. A stronger digital communication strategy, including explicit declarations of sustainable practices, could enhance stakeholder trust, corporate reputation, and alignment with international sustainability standards.

Integration of sustainability dimensions in corporate missions

Figure 2 summarizes the results of the content analysis applied to the 29 companies that explicitly published their corporate mission statements. The analysis revealed a marked prioritization of social-related terms, with "Community/Society" (9 mentions) and "Safety" (8 mentions) being predominant. This strong presence reflects a clear commitment among supplier companies toward community engagement and occupational safety, aligning closely with the mining sector's focus on employee welfare and community relations.

However, terms linked to environmental sustainability (5 mentions) and corporate ethics, such as transparency and honesty (3 mentions), appeared significantly less frequently. This disparity highlights a substantial gap, suggesting these supplier companies perceive environmental responsibility and ethical transparency as secondary issues compared to immediate economic and social concerns. Such an imbalance limits the holistic integration of sustainability principles, posing challenges for these companies in meeting broader sustainability standards and stakeholder expectations effectively.

Balance among sustainability dimensions in corporate missions

To assess how comprehensively the analysed companies integrate sustainability within their corporate missions, the presence of terms representing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions was evaluated following the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework proposed by Elkington (1997). The frequency analysis revealed a pronounced emphasis on economic aspects, present in 100% of the analysed missions. This universal presence underscores a prioritization of financial performance, growth, and market competitiveness as fundamental strategic goals for supplier companies in the mining sector.

In contrast, the social and environmental dimensions were significantly underrepresented, being explicitly mentioned in only 44.83% and 34.48% of the missions, respectively. This indicates a notable imbalance, reflecting a traditional business approach where economic performance and immediate profitability appear as central organizational drivers, while social and environmental responsibilities are relegated to secondary considerations. This trend is particularly concerning given the known environmental and social impacts associated with mining operations.

Further insights emerged when analysing the holistic integration of sustainability dimensions: only 24.14% of companies incorporated all three dimensions in their missions. Meanwhile, nearly half of the companies (44.83%) reflected a fragmented sustainability perspective, including only one dimension, predominantly economic. This fragmented approach limits the companies' potential to achieve sustainable impacts comprehensively and diminishes their ability to respond effectively to growing societal expectations and sustainability standards required by stakeholders, regulatory bodies, and global markets.

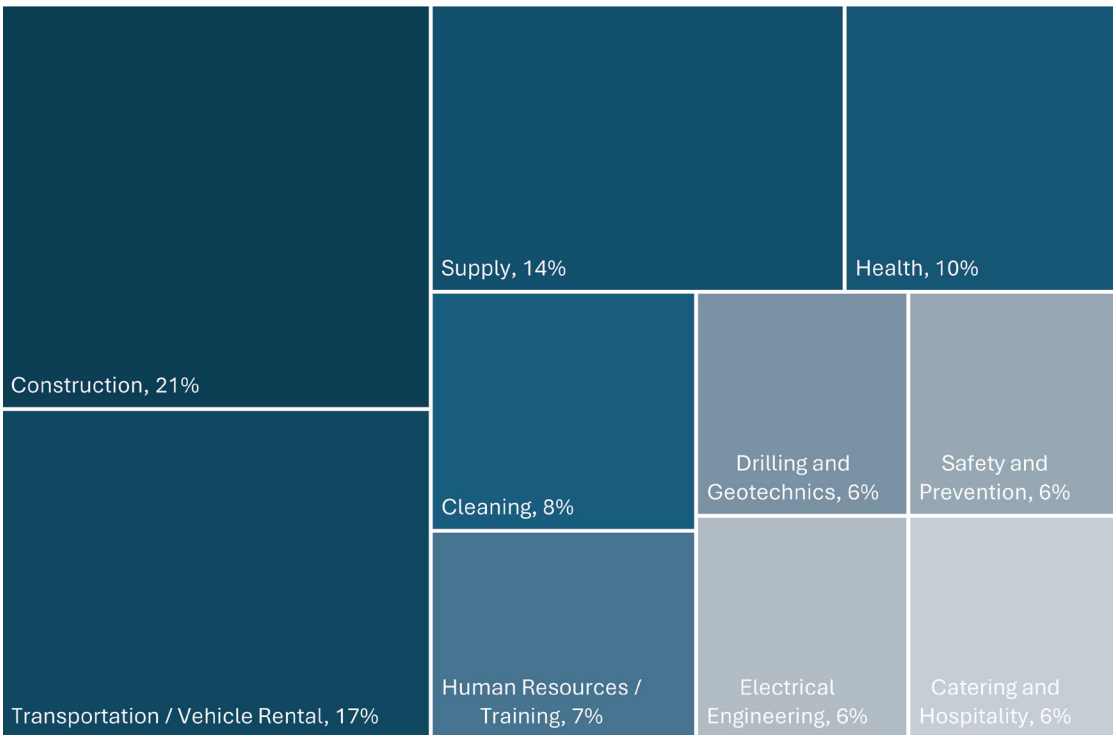

Fig. 2 Proportion of supplier companies by number of services offered. Data compiled based on public records

Patterns of sustainability integration and strategic management alignment

The analysis of sustainability integration within corporate mission statements revealed significant differences among supplier companies, particularly regarding the extent to which they incorporated the three dimensions of the Triple Bottom Line. Only 24.14% of the analysed companies explicitly referenced all three pillars – economic, social, and environmental – in their missions. These companies represented diverse sectors, including catering/hospitality, supply services, and construction, suggesting that the holistic adoption of sustainability discourse is not confined to a specific industry segment. Instead, it appears to be influenced by factors such as strategic vision, managerial commitment, corporate culture, or external pressures, including affiliations with multinational corporations or partnerships with large mining firms.

However, even among companies that reference sustainability-related terms, the discourse often remains largely aspirational. References to "strategic commitment" are generally not accompanied by measurable objectives or concrete actions, limiting the depth and credibility of these claims. This gap highlights a disconnect between rhetorical alignment with sustainability principles and their genuine integration into the corporate identity.

To deepen the understanding of how supplier companies articulate these commitments, a frequency analysis was conducted following the Triple Bottom Line framework. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of references to each sustainability pillar within the analyzed mission statements. As shown, economic considerations overwhelmingly dominate, while social and environmental references are considerably less frequent, evidencing a fragmented integration of sustainability principles.

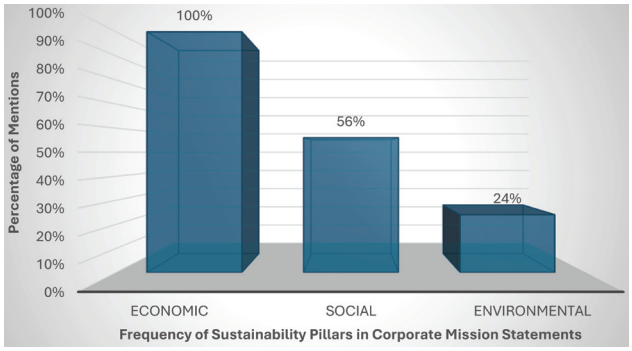

Fig. 3 Distribution of Triple Bottom Line dimensions in mission statements

Table 1 Presence of economic, social, and environmental dimensions in the analyzed companies

Variable	Frequency	Participation
Number of companies reflecting all 3 dimensions	7	24.14%
Number of companies reflecting 2 dimensions	9	31.03%
Number of companies reflecting 1 dimension	13	44.83%

Additionally, the degree of multidimensional integration was assessed to identify whether companies address one, two, or all three sustainability dimensions. Table 1 summarizes these findings, showing that a minority of companies present a comprehensive commitment to sustainability, while the majority exhibit partial or single-dimensional approaches.

Overall, the patterns observed confirm the limited and unbalanced incorporation of sustainability principles among supplier companies in the mining sector. While a few firms demonstrate a broader strategic vision, the prevailing trend reflects a narrow focus on economic outcomes. This fragmented approach to sustainability not only reflects traditional business practices in resource-intensive sectors but also underscores the need for supplier companies to adopt more comprehensive strategies. Future research could explore whether these discursive patterns are mirrored in organizational practices and reporting mechanisms, or whether they remain primarily symbolic, ultimately impacting the ability of these companies to meet growing stakeholder expectations and sustainability standards.

The companies that effectively incorporated sustainability across multiple dimensions in their missions not only communicated a broader strategic vision but were also found to exhibit more advanced management capabilities. The presence of multiple sustainability pillars correlated with a more structured and strategic business approach, including clearer communication of corporate missions online (55% of companies with a website explicitly stated their mission). These firms appear better positioned in terms of transparency, reputation management, and alignment with global sustainability standards (Huerta-Estévez *et al.* 2021; Huerta-Riveros *et al*. 2017).

Additionally, the companies reflecting multiple sustainability dimensions tend to employ strategic management tools aligned with sustainability principles. Such tools might include balanced scorecards, integrated reporting frameworks, and comprehensive sustainability planning methodologies. This strategic alignment fosters improved management of socio-environmental risks and greater responsiveness to stakeholder demands, enhancing their operational effectiveness and long-term viability.

In contrast, the companies exhibiting partial or single-dimensional integration (approximately 75.86%) may experience limitations in addressing stakeholder pressures and adequately responding to sustainability

challenges inherent to the mining industry. Thus, the analysis not only identifies gaps but also underscores critical opportunities for strategic improvement. Supplier companies could enhance their sustainability and competitive advantage through greater adoption and integration of strategic sustainability tools, aligning their organizational missions with comprehensive sustainability frameworks such as the Triple Bottom Line, which advocates for balanced economic, social, and environmental outcomes (Elkington, 1997).

Ultimately, these results align with previous research findings by Arias-Valle *et al.* (2021a, b), confirming that organizations employing strategic sustainability-aligned management tools demonstrate better performance outcomes, more holistic sustainability approaches, and stronger responsiveness to contemporary sustainability expectations.

DISCUSSION

The predominance of economic terms in the corporate mission statements analysed reflects a deeply embedded sectoral priority toward immediate financial outcomes and operational efficiency, common in industries like mining, characterized by high capital investment and strong competitive pressures. Supplier companies in this sector often focus predominantly on profitability and economic growth as primary indicators of success, relegating social and environmental concerns to secondary roles due to perceived trade-offs between sustainability investments and short-term economic performance.

The limited presence of explicit social and environmental terminology indicates a fragmented and potentially superficial integration of sustainability within these companies. While companies do acknowledge community engagement and workplace safety, likely driven by regulatory compliance and direct stakeholder pressure, their comparatively minimal reference to environmental sustainability and ethical transparency suggests these elements are not yet fully internalized into their strategic identity. This represents a critical gap, given the significant social and environmental impacts inherent in mining operations, emphasizing the urgent need for supplier companies to move toward a more integrated and holistic understanding of sustainability.

Furthermore, these results align with broader global trends identified in prior studies (Arias-Valle *et al.* 2021a, b), which confirm that a narrow economic focus can ultimately limit firms' ability to adapt to evolving stakeholder expectations and regulatory frameworks. In this context, supplier companies should recognize the practical benefits of fully integrating sustainability into their strategic vision – such as enhanced reputation, improved stakeholder relations, reduced operational risks, and greater competitiveness in global markets increasingly attentive to comprehensive sustainability standards.

The analysis of corporate mission statements from supplier and service companies in the mining sector of San Juan, Argentina, reveals a partial approach to sustainability, with a pronounced focus on the economic dimension over the social and environmental dimensions. This finding aligns with previous studies, such as those by Arias-Valle *et al.* (2022). Researchers like Ruban and Yashalova (2024) have highlighted the critical need to integrate social and environmental sustainability into corporate missions, arguing that their omission reflects a narrow perspective that limits the positive potential impact of these organizations. Furthermore, it restricts their ability to effectively respond to increasing demands for corporate responsibility in contemporary contexts.

The lack of balance between the three dimensions of sustainability underestimates the long-term impact of corporate operations and could weaken the social license to operate for these companies. This challenge is especially pronounced in communities where expectations for social and environmental responsibility are increasingly significant, as noted by Cruz (2021) and Amos and Boahen (2024). The study's findings are particularly stark, with only 24.14% of companies integrating all three dimensions into their mission statements. This indicates a significant reliance on a limited sustainability vision. Research by Dragomir *et al.* (2024) and Gamu and Soendergaard (2024) demonstrates that a comprehensive approach to sustainability, including economic, social, and environmental pillars, enhances corporate resilience and adaptability to regulatory, social, and market changes. However, the absence of such an approach among suppliers in San Juan suggests the sector may be ill-prepared to meet rising social and environmental demands and comply with stricter regulations designed to mitigate the negative impacts of extractive activities (Rathobei *et al.* 2024).

Supplier companies play a critical role in the mining value chain and have a shared responsibility to promote sustainable practices that transcend mere profitability. The integration of social and environmental values into their missions would not only strengthen their corporate image and legitimacy but also improve their performance and relationships with affected communities. Studies by Setia *et al.* (2024) and Yu *et al.* (2024) support this perspective, emphasizing the potential for improved community relations and operational outcomes. Despite the emphasis on profitability, the limited presence of social and environmental dimensions in mission statements highlights an opportunity to enhance companies' overall commitment to sustainability. As noted by Devenin

(2021) and Dragomir *et al.* (2024), adopting a holistic framework that includes all three sustainability pillars would align with modern expectations for corporate responsibility. Furthermore, this approach would contribute to the stability and long-term success of companies operating in a highly visible and publicly sensitive sector, as highlighted by Campero *et al.* (2024) and Jovanović *et al.* (2023).

Several barriers hinder the effective integration of sustainability dimensions in suppliers' missions. One key factor is the lack of an organizational culture oriented toward sustainability. Many companies focus on achieving immediate operational goals, such as efficient service delivery, rather than adopting broader sustainability values. This issue is compounded by a cultural environment where business success is predominantly measured by economic profitability, often relegating social and environmental considerations to a secondary role, as noted by Wang *et al.* (2024) and Gamu and Soendergaard (2024). Additionally, sustainability is frequently perceived as the sole responsibility of large mining companies, which face greater pressure from communities and regulators. This perception limits the sense of shared accountability across the value chain, with suppliers failing to recognize their crucial role in achieving comprehensive sustainability (Berthet *et al.* 2024; Duho 2024).

Economic constraints further exacerbate this challenge. Many supplier companies operate on narrow profit margins and prioritize resources toward maintaining cost and efficiency competitiveness. Consequently, sustainability efforts are often perceived as an additional cost rather than a strategic investment (Bag *et al.* 2024; Cervantes Barron *et al.* 2024). The lack of economic or regulatory incentives to promote sustainable practices among suppliers reinforces this issue, as suppliers are typically exempt from the obligations faced by larger mining firms. This perpetuates a limited approach to sustainability, as observed by Luo *et al* . (2024) and Li *et al.* (2024).

Another critical issue is the unclear understanding of sustainability concepts among suppliers. Terms such as "sustainability" or "social responsibility" are often vaguely interpreted, which undermines their integration into mission statements. Previous research and informal interviews suggest that many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) perceive these terms as abstract or irrelevant to their immediate priorities. This knowledge gap is further perpetuated by the absence of accessible educational resources and tailored training programs, as noted by Arias-Valle and Marimon (2024a, b). Consequently, sustainability is viewed as an external concept rather than a strategic opportunity.

The limited integration of social and environmental dimensions in supplier missions has significant implications for the mining industry as a whole. By not adopting a holistic approach, these companies weaken their contribution to sustainable development and undermine the efforts of large mining firms to establish responsible value chains. The resulting imbalance affects the public perception of the industry and diminishes its ability to adapt to stricter regulations and evolving expectations from investors and communities, as highlighted by Kwarto *et al.* (2024) and Yousef Farhan (2024).

To address these challenges, it is crucial to implement strategies that enable suppliers to internalize and reflect sustainability principles in their corporate missions. Regulatory frameworks that incentivize sustainable practices across the value chain, as suggested by Berthet *et al.* (2024), would be an essential step forward. Similarly, targeted capacity-building initiatives, such as training programs tailored to supplier needs, can foster a cultural shift toward holistic sustainability practices. These efforts would help suppliers understand how integrating social and environmental dimensions can create long-term value, as emphasized by Cardona Vallès (2024) and Rajaeifar *et al.* (2022).

Collaborative efforts led by large mining firms could also drive meaningful change. By transferring knowledge, tools, and international standards aligned with the SDGs and GRI, these companies can promote sustainable practices among suppliers. Saenz (2023) and Jovanović *et al.* (2023) argue that such alignment improves public perception of suppliers and fosters sustainable growth that benefits both local communities and the broader sector. Furthermore, adopting a holistic sustainability approach should be reframed as a strategic investment rather than an added cost. This perspective aligns with the findings of Amos and Boahen (2024) and Dragomir *et al.* (2024), which suggest that integrating economic, social, and environmental pillars enhances competitiveness, strengthens stakeholder relationships, and mitigates reputational risks. This comprehensive approach is vital for creating resilient and responsible value chains that align with the global economy's increasing prioritization of sustainability.

The findings of this study reveal a pronounced emphasis on the economic dimension in the corporate missions of supplier companies in the mining sector in San Juan, while the social and environmental dimensions remain underrepresented. This imbalance, consistent with previous studies such as those by Ruban and Yashalova (2024), suggests that the commitment to sustainability is perceived in a fragmented manner, limiting these organizations' ability to comprehensively address current sustainability demands. From a practical perspective, this disconnect has significant implications, compromising both the social

legitimacy and resilience of companies in the face of increasing regulatory and social pressures (Campero *et al*. 2024; Cruz 2021).

Addressing this gap requires implementing strategies that enable supplier companies to internalize and reflect sustainability principles in their corporate missions. For instance, Berthet *et al.* (2024) highlight the importance of establishing regulatory frameworks that incentivize sustainable practices within supply chains. Similarly, training and awareness initiatives on sustainability, as suggested by Cardona Vallès (2024) and Rajaeifar *et al.* (2022), can play a pivotal role in transforming organizational culture. These programs can help companies understand how integrating social and environmental dimensions generates long-term value and enhances their competitive edge.

In addition, initiatives led by large mining companies, such as the transfer of international standards aligned with the SDGs and the GRI, can drive changes in value chain dynamics. Saenz (2023) and Jovanović *et al.* (2023) argue that strategic alignment with these global goals not only improves the public perception of supplier companies but also fosters sustainable growth that benefits local communities and the sector as a whole.

The effective integration of social and environmental dimensions, as proposed by Amos and Boahen (2024) and Dragomir *et al.* (2024), should not be viewed as an additional cost but rather as a strategic investment. Such an approach enhances competitiveness, strengthens relationships with stakeholders, and reduces reputational risks. A holistic perspective can create more responsible and resilient value chains that align with the expectations of a global economy increasingly prioritizing sustainability. This transition is essential for both the long-term success of supplier companies and the broader sustainability of the mining industry.

The findings of this study underscore a partial and uneven integration of sustainability principles in the mission statements of supplier companies operating in the mining sector of San Juan, Argentina. While the economic dimension is clearly dominant, social and environmental aspects are referenced less frequently and often lack specificity. This trend reflects broader structural patterns observed in resource-dependent regions, where smaller firms face institutional, technical, and cultural barriers to adopting comprehensive sustainability practices. In San Juan, the influence of large mining corporations, international partnerships, and public procurement policies may serve as levers to promote deeper sustainability integration among suppliers. Therefore, actionable strategies – such as incorporating sustainability criteria into supply contracts, offering training programs for SMEs, and strengthening local ESG regulations – could enhance alignment with global standards. These recommendations are particularly relevant in the context of San Juan's growing role in lithium and copper production, which places increased international attention on the region's environmental and social performance.

CONCLUSION

This study critically examines how supplier companies in the mining sector in San Juan communicate their commitment to sustainability through their corporate missions. A qualitative content analysis revealed a pronounced emphasis on the economic dimension, while the social and environmental dimensions remain underrepresented. Although this focus reflects the immediate operational needs of supplier companies, the lack of balance in representing the pillars of sustainable development limits their comprehensive contribution to the sustainability of the mining industry.

The study highlights several challenges that supplier companies face in integrating and communicating sustainable values. These include cultural barriers, such as the perception that sustainability is the exclusive responsibility of large mining companies; conceptual barriers, stemming from a limited understanding of sustainability; and economic barriers, arising from the lack of financial incentives and dedicated resources. These factors constrain the ability of these organizations to prioritize sustainable practices in both their operations and strategic communications.

Despite these limitations, progress was identified in key areas such as safety and labour welfare, which are critical in a high-risk sector like mining. However, the insufficient attention to social and environmental dimensions underscores the need for more inclusive and balanced strategies to strengthen a comprehensive commitment to sustainability. This imbalance not only limits the positive impact of supplier companies on communities and the environment but also compromises their ability to adapt to increasing expectations from regulators, consumers, and communities regarding social and environmental responsibility.

From an academic perspective, this work broadens the understanding of how secondary actors in the mining value chain address sustainability, identifying gaps and opportunities for future research. Incorporating quantitative methodologies and comparative analyses across regions or sectors could further enrich this field. Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of training supplier companies in the concept of sustainability, encouraging the adoption of international standards such as those established by the GRI and SDGs. These frameworks would not only

enhance their corporate image and reputation but also improve relationships with communities and stakeholders, fostering long-term legitimacy and stability.

Finally, this study demonstrates that explicit commitment to sustainability should not be perceived as an additional burden but as a strategic investment that contributes to economic, social, and environmental success. Adopting an integrated vision will enable these companies to not only meet current demands but also position themselves as key players in the transition toward a sustainable development model in one of the most critical sectors for local and global economies.

This study analysed the integration of sustainability within corporate mission statements among mining supplier companies in San Juan, Argentina. The findings reveal a predominant emphasis on the economic dimension, reflecting the traditional prioritization of financial sustainability and profitability characteristic of high-investment industries such as mining. However, significant imbalances were identified, with social and environmental dimensions considerably less represented, signalling a fragmented approach to sustainability. The limited explicit communication of environmental and ethical commitments suggests substantial room for strategic improvement in aligning business practices with comprehensive sustainability principles. These insights underscore the importance of developing balanced strategic frameworks that integrate economic, social, and environmental goals, enhancing corporate transparency, stakeholder engagement, and long-term operational resilience.

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