

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION THROUGH MARKET ORIENTATION: EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE THREE MARKET ORIENTED COMPONENTS

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ABSTRACT

As today's organizations have to react to customer and competitors and then to manage their own resources and capabilities. This study examines the effect of market orientation components on customer satisfaction of food restaurants in Jaffna district. The model was tested using data collected from 60 food restaurants and 600 major customers in Jaffna district by using questionnaire. The findings illustrated the effects of the three components of market orientation within Food restaurant firms as customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter functional coordination influence on customer satisfaction. This research consider the resource dependency theory, and Firms have major concern to create customer value through adopting and anticipating developments with available resources and capabilities. It provided managerial implications to food restaurant on market oriented implementation strategies. Further firms understand retaining customers are very important and customers can easily switch to competitive restaurants. Having proper inter-functional coordination base on resource with consideration of customers and competitors leads to success and survival of firms. Overall, high levels of customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter functional coordination for food restaurants are healthy, the findings also reveal that if every functional unit in a restaurant is wide and major minded with their sole intention for dealing with customers to reap sustainable satisfaction.

Keywords: *Competitor orientation, Customer orientation, Customer satisfaction, Inter functional coordination, Market orientation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, firms increasingly attention on their core competences, and firms react to customer needs. Until recently, firms fashioned value for customers by evolving market oriented product and services based on enduring observing of customer needs,

market condition and environmental factors.

A firm achieves a success by customer satisfaction and has aroused great attention to the customer perspective, competitor perspective and resource based view (Barney, 1991).

It is strongly supposed that market-oriented organizations reveal superior performance (Narver & Slater, 1990; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Slater & Narver, 1994a; Homburg & Pflesser, 2000; Zhou et al., 2009). Market orientation is found to foster superior value creation for customer (Narver & Slater, 1990), and value creation is the key to customer satisfaction in relationship marketing practices (Bolton & Lemon, 1999). Market orientation has a decisive, long-term sway on customer relationship, customer satisfaction and customer retention are relationship outcomes (Fornell, 1992).

Researcher built this study that market orientation affects customer satisfaction along the restaurants. Therefore, researcher also examine market orientation at firms and customer satisfaction at the customer. Resource based theories may support our study, and researcher used there source-dependency perspective to formulate our hypotheses about the relationships among market orientation and its impact on the customer satisfaction of the end user. The study has threefold contribution to theory. First, it introduces a food restaurant perspective of the key variables market orientation, Second the customers what they expect form food restaurants, third how the market orientation impacts on the customer satisfaction.

2. RESEARCH GAP

By inspecting the role of market orientation on customer satisfaction of food restaurants,

our study aims to make contributions to fill the following gaps. Previous research has accepted that manufacturing firms and service firms contrast in the way their market orientation practices affect business performance (Agarwal et al., 2003; Kircaet al., 2005; Sin et al., 2005; Tsiotsou, 2010), however, what is unique for food restaurants has not been clearly identified. Further very few studies have been conducted to reveal the relationship between MO and customer satisfaction. So far, lack of studies have examined market orientation in Jaffna district particularly. Role of market orientation creating customer satisfaction has been absent in studies in food restaurants. Furthermore this study tries to fill a part of this gap examining market orientation and customer satisfaction of resource based perspectives.

Except for a few studies (Agarwal et al., 2003) the managerial implications on market orientation effects are generally considered applicable to all types of firms. Food restaurants, especially small- and medium-sized ones, however, face constant and big challenges of maintaining tangible advantages and retaining production differentiation. The effects of market orientation for food restaurant firms may be different from those described in the generic findings. Thus, to offer valuable implications to food restaurants, we attempt to closely examine market orientation issues within the restaurant.

Customer satisfaction is considered as one of the fundamental building block in relationship marketing (Szymanski & Henard, 2001; Chandrashekar et al., 2007; Dong et al., 2011). Previous literature is not informative on how the three components of market orientation interact to influence customer satisfaction in food restaurant in Jaffna district. While some studies used the composite measure of market orientation in their studies, Han et al. (1998) advocated that the relationship between each component of market orientation and performance. This study was put forwarded with the purpose of providing a better understanding of the effects of the three market orientation components on customer satisfaction of food restaurant firms.

Previous studies used firms' assessment to measure customer satisfaction (Dong et al., 2001), but rather than firms' self-assessment, customer assessment would be more accurate to reflect the true opinion. In our survey procedure, we solicited a list of up to ten major business customers from each of the surveyed food restaurant. Thus, dyadic data from both the firm to assess market orientation and the customer to assess satisfaction would have been ideal for testing the research model.

In Jaffna, the restaurant industry is undergoing a dramatic transformation and experiencing heightened competition. Restaurant is an important but often

neglected area of study (Kivela, Inbakaran & Reece, 1999a). The fact is that 'restaurant business' is regarded as a low credence service and the quality of the services are difficult to prove until customers patronize the restaurant. Moreover, the quality of the service that customers encounter may be different each time they re-visit that particular restaurant, thus influencing the level of satisfaction and eventually affecting their re-patronage intentions. Given these important issues, this paper aims to examine the nature and strength of relationships between market orientation and customer satisfaction.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Market Orientation

Liu, Luo and Shi (2002) expressed that "Market orientation has been characterized as a culture of the organization that requires customer satisfaction be put at the center of business operations and therefore produces superior value for customers and outstanding performance for the firm". "Customer needs and expectations evolve over time and delivering consistently high quality products and services and responsiveness to changing marketplace needs become important for the success of firms' (Ihinmoyan & Akinyele, 2010). Kohli and Jaworski (1990) defines 'market orientation as the organization-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future needs of customers, dissemination of intelligence within an organization and responsiveness to it.

Jaworski and Kohli(1993) Narver and Slater (1990),Ruekert(1992)] and Deshpande and Farely(1996) explored five different perspectives of market orientation as decision-making perspective, market intelligence perspective, culturally based behavioral perspective, strategic perspective, and the customer orientation perspective. Narver and Slater (1990) proposed a slightly different definition , 'market orientation as the organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of superior value for buyers and thus superior performance for business (Kolar, 2010), these authors define three basic components of the construct as customer orientation, competitor orientation and dinter-functional coordination.

3.2 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction and customer retention are the two essential stages for the customer relationship outcome. Firms need to focus on delivering customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is defined as satisfaction that accumulates across a series of transactions of service encounters. Many studies found antecedents of end-user satisfaction on the purchase or product level (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Patterson, Johnson, & Spreng, 1997). The dominant paradigm is that disconfirmation of expectations is a very important determinant of end-user satisfaction. Disconfirmation is defined as the difference between an individual's pre-

purchase expectations and post-purchase experiences with regard to the performance of the product or service (Patterson Johnson, and Spreng, 1997).

3.3 Resource-Dependence Theory (RDT)

The central position of the resource-dependence theory (RDT) is that firms change as well as negotiate with their environment, i.e., stakeholders, in order to access the resources they need to survive (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). First, survival depends on the ability of the firm to satisfy its customers (Christensen & Bower, 1996; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Firms create access to resources and capabilities required to create customer value (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Ulrich & Barney, 1984). Thus, in adapting and anticipating the developments in the customer market, firms depend on the resources of organization, to assure that those critical customer demands are satisfied (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Ulrich & Barney, 1984). Following the RDI, researcher suggests that focal firm's major concern is to satisfy customer demands. A firm will achieve customer satisfaction by allocating firm resources in such a way that the firm can provide a suitable response to its customer (Christensen and Bower, 1996). A market orientation helps a firm identify the demands imposed on the firm.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

As the fundamental premise of market orientation is to discover and satisfy

customer needs (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990) the literature documents revealed the positive relationship between market orientation and customer satisfaction (Moorman & Rust, 1999; Sanzo et al., 2003; Gainer & Padanyi, 2005; Kirca et al., 2005). Among the three dimensions of market orientation, customer orientation is directly related to the marketing concept, which places at top priority on satisfying customer needs (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Customer orientation dictates that a firm's business strategy must be centered on its customers, and it requires that companies have an extraordinary caliber to glean new insights into consumers' evolving needs to satisfy their current and latent needs (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). More importantly, a customer-oriented firm is likely to develop sustainable competitive advantage from an in-depth understanding of the key elements along the buyers' value chain and their dynamics over time (Zhou et al., 2009). Customer orientation enables a firm to create and deliver superior customer value, which positively leads to customer satisfaction in the near future (Slater & Narver, 1994b, 2000). As the basic purpose of customer orientation is to anticipate and satisfy customer needs, it grants customer-oriented firms the ability to acquire and satisfy customers (Slater & Narver, 2000). So the study proposed hypothesis as:

H¹: Customer orientation has a significant influence on customer satisfaction.

Han et al. (1998) found that competitor orientation has the largest variance in the composite construct among the three components. Competition orientation requires that firms closely analyze and monitor major competitors' strategic intents and tactical moves (Noble et al., 2002). Competitor-sensitive firms tend to achieve operational efficiency, as they draw a direct comparison with their close rivals on salient factors, such as cost and price (Slater & Narver, 1994b). As such, cost and differentiation advantages help competitor-oriented manufacturing firms create and deliver superior customer value (Slater & Narver, 1994b), which may increase customer satisfaction. According to Lucas and Ferrell (2000), me-too-products were a result of competitor orientation, and in traditional manufacturing sectors, me-too-products can be used to achieve market success. By gaining the competence in offering me-too-products to existing customers, it reasonably drives customer firms to stay rather than switch. Market-oriented firms are better at offering customer value (Slater & Narver, 2000; Spiteri & Dion, 2004). Given the fact that in the food restaurants, customers may directly compare the product benefits (e.g., quality and product performance) offered by different manufacturers to determine received value (Spiteri & Dion, 2004), a manufacturer that intends to offer the highest value needs to offer greater product benefits than its competitors do. Thus, to create superior customer value that leads to customer

satisfaction, manufacturing firms have to consider competitor orientation as a priority. In other words, manufacturers not only have to anticipate and fulfill customer needs, but also need to fulfill such customer needs in a better way than the competitors. Researcher proposed hypothesis as:

H₂: competitor orientation has a significant influence on customer satisfaction

The task of creating and maintaining customers is not limited to the marketing department (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990), an integration of diverse departments can achieve much more than the summation of single units working alone (Atuahene-Gima & Evangelista, 2000; Eng, 2005). The marketing concept explicitly requires a concerted and coordinated effort for all the functional departments in a firm to pursue common goals (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990). Given that customer value is actualized through the collaboration of all the functional units within a firm (Eng, 2005) the absence of inter-functional coordination can be detrimental to achieving customer satisfaction. On the contrary, when consensus and harmony are built across departments, a concerted effort can greatly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of obtaining goals simply because energy and time spent on internal struggling for power and position among departments will be saved and used more productively (Atuahene-Gima, 1996; Eng, 2005).

Thus, a manufacturing firm with higher level of inter-functional coordination is expected to be better at pursuing organization-wise goals in customer satisfaction. The study proposed hypothesis as:

H₃: Interfunctional coordination has a influence on customer satisfaction.

To examine the role of market orientation in delivering customer satisfaction, researcher propose a conceptual framework. Following figure outlines the hypothesized relationships between market orientation and customer satisfaction.

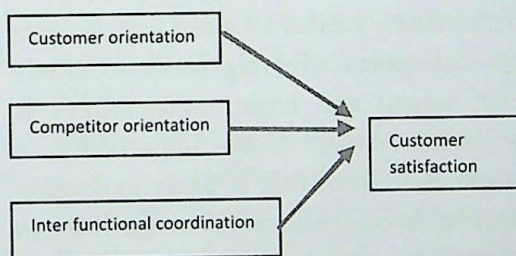


Figure 1: Research framework
Source: Researcher creation based on Fornell (1992)

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Sample and Data Collection

Researcher applied convenient sampling method in this research. In order to examine market orientation and customer satisfaction, researcher collected survey data from two parties: firms and customers. A questionnaire served as the primary means for data collection. For two group of respondents, we developed a separate questionnaires. The respondents participating

in this research were typically managers and customers of food restaurants based in the Jaffna district. The original questionnaire was developed in English and translated to Tamil to allow both Tamil focal firms. In total, 80 managers and 800 customers were contacted for participation, 67 agreed to participate in the research and received a link or copy to their personal questionnaire. We received 60 completed questionnaires from managers and 600 questionnaires from customers after several reminders over the phone.

5.2 Instruments Used

The measures used in this study were drawn from existing scales, which have been tested over time in respect to their validity and reliability. We used the original market orientation scale in Narver and Slater (1990) and Han et al.(1998). In both studies, the scale consisted of six items for customer orientation, four for competitor orientation and five for inter functional coordination. The customer satisfaction five-item scale was adapted from Garbarino and Johnson (1999) and overall or cumulative satisfaction from Anderson(1998).In the questionnaire, all the measures were based on Likert-type scales with a range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measures (high factor loadings(>.70) only) are provided in the Appendix 1

6. DATAANALYSIS

We assessed the three measures of market orientation components through a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses for the purpose of measure validation (Bollen, 1989). In the exploratory

factor analysis, we found that one from the customer orientation scale and one from the inter-functional coordination scale did not load on the expected construct. Other items all showed high factor loadings (>0.70). Accordingly, we omitted the two items from further analysis. Next, the confirmatory factor analysis showed satisfactory GFIs (>0.90) and high, significant factor loadings (>0.70) for each of the three constructs after the omission of the two items (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hu & Bentler, 1999). In addition, all constructs had their Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, showing high internal reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The descriptive statistics and validity/reliability reports of the constructs are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and validity / reliability of construct

Variable	Mean	SD	GFI	Reliability
Customer orientation	4.3	0.65	0.94	0.76
Competitor orientation	3.9	0.55	0.91	0.71
Inter functional coordination	3.8	0.67	0.96	0.70
Customer satisfaction	4.12	0.58	0.92	0.78

6.1 Sample Adequacy Test

The value of KMO is 0.783 (>0.5). It indicated the sampling adequacy was satisfactory and the analysis test can be conducted correctly and the sample used is

adequate the minimum acceptable value of KMO as supports by Othman and Owen (0.5).

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO measures of Sample Adequacy		0.783
Bartlett's Test of sphericity	Approximate Chi-Square	520.377
	DF	3
	Sig	0.000

7. RESULTS

As the three components of market orientation are correlated, we entered the main effects into the correlation and linear regression model first, followed by the interaction terms. Table 3 contains the correlation and regression results.

Table 3: correlation and regression coefficient

Independent variables	Dependent variable-CS		
	R	Adjusted R ²	Significance of F
CSO	0.702**	0.640	0.00
CMO	0.651 **	0.510	0.00
IFC	0.660**	0.430	0.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (one-tailed).

H₁ argues that firms' customer orientation has positive effects customer satisfaction. The results show that customer orientation is positively related to customer satisfaction (=

0.702, R²=0. 640 **, p < 0.01). H1 is supported.

H₂ argues that competitor orientation has positive effects on customer satisfaction. The correlation coefficient between competitor orientation and customer satisfaction is 0. 651(P<0.01). This result reveals the significant high positive relationship between competitor orientation and customer satisfaction. The adjusted R² is 0.510, it explains 51% of customer satisfaction is encountered by the competitor orientation at significant of 0.000 value. The significant value reveals there is significant impact of competitor orientation on customer satisfaction. Thus, H2 is supported.

H₃ argues that inter-functional coordination has significant effects on customer satisfaction. The results show a positive relationship between inter-functional coordination and customer satisfaction (=0.660, r =0.430 ,p < 0.01). Thus, H3 is not supported.

8. DISCUSSION

The main thesis of this research is to investigate how market orientation components influence on customer satisfaction of food restaurants. Customer satisfaction has been considered a key measure for the organization success (Szymanski & Henard, 2001;

Chandrashekar et al., 2007). Spiteri, and Dion(2004)included customer satisfaction in their model of market orientation, and argued that satisfaction is a fourth component, not a consequence, of market orientation. Lings and Greenley (2009) found a positive association between market orientation and customer satisfaction, but how each component of market orientation relates to satisfaction was explored in the B2B industry, but in this research customer satisfaction was assessed from firm.

Our findings fill these research void. Our results show that customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter functional coordination of restaurants are positively related to customer satisfaction. As customer orientation advocates delivering superior customer value(Slater & Narver, 1994b), customer orientation is known to be an important factor affecting customer satisfaction. More importantly, it shows that competitor orientation has a stronger effect on customer satisfaction, as competitor orientation also helps to shape manufacturers' customer value by offering customers products that are superior to competitors' products (Slater and Narver, 2000). Being competitor-oriented can tremendously increase customer satisfaction. Competitor-oriented manufacturing firms can learn from and benchmark with their competitors to fulfill customers' needs through a differentiated route. Competitor orientation has direct

effect on customer satisfaction (Szymanski, & Henard, 2001). Being competitor-oriented can tremendously increase customer value and customer satisfaction.

Previous research established a direct relationship between inter-functional coordination and firm performance (Atuahene- Gima, 1996; Eng, 2005) and realized various hidden benefits of inter functional coordination for a firm (Lucas & Ferrell, 2000). Further the results of another research indicate that inter functional coordination had no direct effect on customer satisfaction manufacturing firms. It means that a coordinated effort alone is not enough to bring positive outcomes on customer satisfaction for manufacturing firms. But our research reveals that inter functional coordination has significant effect on customer satisfaction. It means that the inter-functional coordination is very important for food restaurants. Because the production and sales are in the same period or short period of time. All inter function must be coordinated well to prompt service. Further this implies that, if all the functional departments in restaurants are highly involved and coordinated for customer orientation and competitor orientation to an extreme, the impacts of strategic orientations on customer satisfaction. Restaurants intend to achieve a highlevel of customer satisfaction through inter functional coordination across diverse departments. The findings also reveal that if every functional unit in a restaurant is wide

and major minded with their sole intention for dealing with customers to reap sustainable satisfaction.

Due to the nature of intensive competition of the restaurant sectors, customer cost is an important aspect of customer value (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). If restaurants motivate all the functional staffs to communicate with business customers, it leads to cross-functional learning of customer needs, internal coordinating efforts and ultimately customer satisfaction, thus, restaurants' cross-functional customer and competitor orientation may actually inhibit the firm's innovativeness in servicing customer needs in the long term.

If restaurants are fully occupied with the implementation of customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter functional coordination in every section, there may best length, flexibility and continuity of product offerings and customer policies, sustaining the positive impact on customer relationship outcomes. Overall, high levels of customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter functional coordination for food restaurants are healthy, but going overboard to every functional area may actually turn customers off.

9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis was based on food restaurants firms engaging in marketing. Although all market orientation components are strongly

related to customer satisfaction, this study did not explored how customer value and customer cost connect the two sides. Prior research proposed that market orientation is related to superior value (Narver & Slater, 1990), which in turn is related to customer satisfaction (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Lapierre et al., 1999).

As market orientation is positively related to firm performance (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Kumar et al., 1998; Narver and Slater, 1990; Pelham, 2000; Noble et al. 2002), it is desirable to further investigate how the three components of market orientation influence customer relationship outcomes, which, in turn, influence firm performance. Although a number of studies found a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and performance (Anderson et al., 1994; 1997), others did not (Bernhardt et al., 2000). The mixed findings suggest that the role of customer satisfaction in firm performance be investigated. The relative contributions of market orientation, customer satisfaction and customer retention to firm performance in food restaurant could be studied further in future research.

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