Antecedents and Consequences of Individual Market Orientation

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Abstract

Even if evaluated at an organizational level, a market-oriented culture of an organization is genuinely supported by the outlooks and activities of the organization's employees. A market orientation strategy cannot be developed without every employee's active understanding, willingness, and ability to perform in market-oriented methods. Consequently, an individual employee must be familiar with the task of gathering and assessing the value of market information, and also, he should be willing to share it with other employees. We surveyed a variety of employees at many levels and roles in different central Indian financial services organizations. This research identifies the important individual-level antecedents and consequences that organizations should account for once making an attempt to stimulate company-wide market-oriented behaviours. These embrace the fostering psychological contracts, modelling of learning methods by agile learners, inflated opportunities, and time to develop personal ties between customers and workers in numerous roles at intervals in the firm.

Keywords: **market orientation, learning orientation, customer contact, services marketing, psychological contract**

JEL Classification: M310, M390, M500

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Market orientation has been considered to be a very important concept in the field of marketing in the current era. The firms which follow the concept of market orientation always try to enhance "understanding of customers," while constantly developing and delivering superior solutions to them through timely responsiveness (Narver & Slater, 1990). Jaworski and Kohli (1993) stated that a firm's market orientation is built upon three dimensions: The organization-wide acquisition, dissemination, and management of market intelligence. The market orientation literature has been abundantly supplied with theoretical and empirical studies, which have described the importance of market orientation for the performance of a firm at an organizational level of analysis (Narver & Slater, 1990). However, researchers have rarely studied the contribution of individuals. Scholars and academicians focused their concentration on the firm-level constructs, ignoring the underlying regular practices being carried out by individuals that develop and form the orientation (Nelson & Winter, 1982).

Various scholars have come up with empirical work on the topic of market orientation. Researchers in the past focused on replicating antecedents and consequences of market orientation and towards the development of an applicable measure of construct to test its effect on organizational performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli, Jaworski, & Kumar, 1993; Narver & Slater, 1990; Siguaw, Brown, & Widing II, 1994; Slater & Narver, 1995). However, researchers have rarely studied the contribution of individuals. Although, researchers have viewed these regular practices from an organizational level, few of them have considered the actions of individual employees, or have attempted to understand the social-psychological drivers of market orientation of employees within a firm (Jones, Busch, & Dacin, 2003). The most elaborative work was carried out by Schlosser and McNaughton (2007) in which they briefed about the antecedents of individual market orientation of employees of

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financial institutions. Ho, Niden, and Johneny (2011) stated work performance and future intentions of an employee as consequences of individual market orientation. Schlosser and McNaughton (2007) defined individual market orientation as the responsibility undertaken by an individual employee to gather and assess the value of market information, and the willingness to share it with other employees.

In the present paper, we have discussed the factors which act as antecedents which motivate an employee to exhibit market oriented behaviour and what are the possible consequences of market oriented behaviour.

Antecedents of Individual Market Orientation

Prior investigation in market orientation studies centered just on the individual level by means of customer-oriented behaviour (e.g., Alhakimi & Baharun, 2009; Brown, Mowen, Donavan, & Licata, 2002; Jones et al., 2003) or then again on different individual level predecessors or conclusions of market orientation technique (e.g. Celuch, Kasouf, & Strieter, 2000). This was acknowledged in light of the fact that the customer oriented behaviour barely focused on customers and did not recognize individual efforts. The other stream distinguishes vital individual level issues, yet, it does not test them in the connection of market oriented behaviours performed by every employee. To fill this gap, the present study examines predecessors at the individual level.

➲ **Psychological Contracts:** The psychological contract explains how role obligations shared by both employees and the employers can direct employees towards market-oriented practices (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2007). The psychological contract is described as the belief of an individual, formed by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organizations (Rousseau, 1995). The psychological contract envisions the exchange of promises between an employee and an organization and represents an individual's belief in the reciprocal obligations arising out of the interpretation of promises (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Psychological contracts ,therefore, can be coined as unwritten expectations of the employees which they expect that their organizations will implement for their welfare.

➲ **H1: Psychological contracts lead an employee to demonstrate market-oriented behaviour.**

➲ **Learning Orientation:** At the level of the organization, researchers have related market orientation with learning orientation (Baker & Sinkula, 1999) with channel relationships (Langurak, 2001) and also with inter functional differences (Atuahene-Gima, 1996). These causative factors provided a path for investigating individual level market orientation being practiced by employees in this particular research paper. March and Simon (1958) and Agryris and Schon (1978) claimed that learning orientation is a process through which the organization discovers errors and corrects these errors. Senge (1990) proposed that learning organizations can develop an employee's capabilities to achieve the goals they desired. He described learning orientation as processes and patterns of learning itself. Lin (2001) considered learning orientation as a mechanism by which the culture of learning promotes innovation in an organization. Han, Kim, and Srivastava (1998) and Hurley and Hult (1998) empirically tested and found a relationship between a construct they referred to as “learning and development” and innovation, but did not include a measure of market orientation, or a complete measure of learning orientation.

➲ **H2 : The more employees demonstrate a high learning agility, the more likely they are to exhibit market-oriented behaviours.**

➲ **Customer Contact:** Market orientated behaviour of an individual employee varies according to customer contact experienced by him, and according to different roles which he anticipates to play in the future (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2007). It is essential to understand how market-oriented behaviours are interpreted throughout an organization. Few previous studies included such a focus, preferring to target marketing and senior management teams (Wood, Bhuian, & Keicker, 2000). A few of those considered differences across various business functions in contrast with marketing and operations in manufacturing firms (e.g., Kahn, 2001) or focused on those with close customer contact in studies of sales force and customer orientation (e.g., Harris & Ogbonna, 2001; Langurak, 2001).

Employees fulfil various roles in organizations. Roles require different skills and abilities, some narrowly focused, on the same broad spectrum. Therefore, some employees may have access to more market information than other employees do, and this shapes their degree of information generation. It is generally believed that front line employees are more inclined to develop market oriented behaviour (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2007). Schmit and Allscheid (1995) also argued that an employee directs his efforts towards customer satisfaction due to elongated customer contact. This is so because front-end employees are more exposed to the customer and receive new market information, which is later on disseminated among the employees of an organization. It also forms extrinsic (economic) parts of their psychological contracts (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2007). Employees who indulge more in customer contact also exhibit organizational citizenship behaviour and are more likely to perform extra-role behaviours (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Ahearne, 1998; Organ, 1988). Dasari and Gunaseelan (2012) also argued that contact with customers is important to increase business performance.

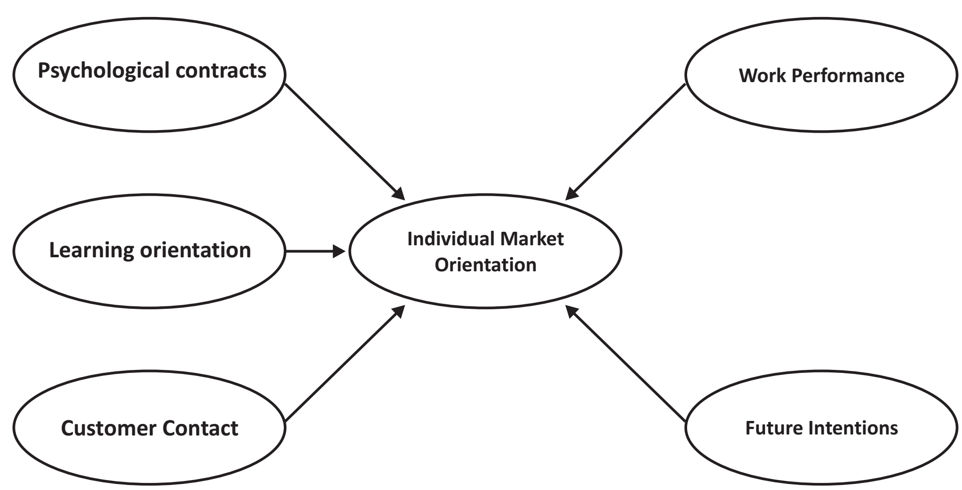
➲ **H3: The more frequent their contact with customers, the more likely employees are to perform market-oriented behaviours.**

Employees with higher satisfaction level and commitment exhibit market oriented behaviour at discretion. Whereas, dissatisfied and uncommitted employees do not exhibit market oriented behaviour.

Consequents of Individual Market Orientation

➲ **Work Performance:** Work performance is considered as a parameter for measuring performance of an employee in an organizational outfit. Schlosser and McNaughton (2007, 2009) and Ho et al. (2011) indicated that work performance is a consequence of individual level market orientation of an employee. Work performance is defined as an employee's ability to effectively perform according the requirements of the job effectively. Schlosser and McNaughton (2007, 2009) found in their studies that the work performance of employees who exhibited individual market oriented behaviour was better than those employees who were less market oriented.

Figure 1. Antecedents and Consequences of I-MO



They stated that because of individual market oriented behaviour, their work performance increased. Green Jr., Inman, Brown, and Willis (2005), Caruana, Ramaseshan, and Ewing, (1998a) and Ho et al. (2011) in their studies stated that there is a positive relationship between work performance and market orientation.

➲ **H4: Individual market orientation has a positive relationship with work performance.**

➲ **Future Intentions:** Future intentions are those prospects which an employee sees for himself in the future. Ho et al. (2011) in their study done on 'Remisiers' in Malaysia found that future intentions referred to as self-development of an employee, where he sees himself in the future. Basically, it is what he intends to achieve in the future. Zollo and Winter (2002) stated that continuous learning and training evolved the employees, resulting in conception of future intentions in them. Schlosser and McNaughton (2007, 2009) stated that market oriented behaviour of the individual also shapes up the future intentions of an employee.

➲ **H5: Individual market orientation has a positive relationship with future intentions.**

Development of the Scale and Research Methodology

In this research, primary data was collected using convenience sampling to understand the individual market orientation of employees of financial services companies and its causes and effects. A self-administered questionnaire was provided to the respondents. The measurement scale of Schlosser and McNaughton's 'I-MARKOR' (2009) was adapted, and the scaling technique used was 5-point Likert type scale. The Figure 1 exhibits the proposed model depicting the relationships among the variables examined for the study. The data collection for the research took place during September - October 2013. The data about financial organizations in central India and their employees was gathered through the Internet. Three hundred and fifty self-administered questionnaires were sent through post to 50 financial organizations located in Central India. At first, the response rate was just 20%. Through consistent telephonic follow ups made by us, the response rate improved. Finally, 211 questionnaires were returned, and out of these, 196 questionnaires were considered usable (the response rate being 56%).

Regarding the demographic profile of the respondents, a majority of the respondents were back-end executives (34%), assistant managers (31%), and senior managers (30%). Front end executives comprised of the least majority of the respondents (5%). Most of the respondents (nearly 70%) were aged between 31-40 years of age. Majority of the respondents (57% of the respondents) were men, and women comprised of 43% of the total respondents. With reference to the respondents' educational levels, about 39% of the respondents were post graduates, and 36% of the total respondents were graduates.

Results and Discussion

➲ **Reliability and Validity :** The reliability value of more than 0.6 is considered good. The reliability methods which are applied are also equally important. The items in the questionnaire had Cronbach's alpha value of 0.824 (refer to Table 1). The items from the same questionnaire had Guttman's split-half reliability coefficient of 0.898 (refer to Table 1). Thus, it can be inferred that the data collected was highly reliable.

Antecedents of Individual Market Orientation

Here discussed are the antecedents of individual market orientation which are **(a)** psychological contract, **(b)** future intentions, and **(c)** Customer contact.

➲ **Psychological Contract and Individual Market Orientation :** We focused on the antecedents of individual market orientation (IMO). In the study, we found a positive and strong relationship between psychological

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha and Guttman's Split Half Reliability Coefficient Statistics for Total Data

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Guttman's Split- Half reliability coefficient	No. of Items
0.824	61	0.898	61

Table 2. Correlation Between Variables in the Model

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Psychological Contract	1					
2.	Learning Orientation	0.540**	1				
3.	Customer Contact	0.782**	0.318**	1			
4.	Market Orientation	0.877**	.670	.809	1		
5.	Work Performance	0.500**	0.716**	0.303**	0.588**	1	
6.	Future Intentions	0.08	0.044	0.052	0.06	-0.031	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Antecedents to Individual Market Orientation: Standardized Regression Coefficients

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
	Individual Market Orientation
Psychological Contracts	0.377***
Learning Orientation	0.337***
Customer Contact	0.407***
R^2	0.883
N	196

****p* < .001

contracts and market orientation (refer to Table 2). The Pearson's ' *r* ' for the correlation between psychological contracts and individual market orientation is 0.877. The tested variables have a statistically significant correlation with Sig. (2-tailed) value being 0.000. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a strong and positive correlation between psychological contracts and market orientation.

We hypothesized a positive relationship between psychological contracts and market orientation. The psychological contracts appear to facilitate individual market orientation well (as observed in the Table 3, b = 0.377, p <0.001). The study of the standardized regression coefficient in the sample suggests that the psychological contracts have a strong impact on market orientation (refer to Table 3). It appears that most of the employees in the organizations emphasized that psychological contracts between them and the employers were important catalysts in triggering market oriented behaviour in them. This finding is similar to earlier research studies carried out by Schlosser and McNaughton (2007), Guest and Conway (1997), and Morrison and Robinson (1997). It can also be inferred that employees hesitate in adopting market oriented methods/ways if the psychological contracts are not mutually fulfilled by the employers. The study also shows that if a private college or university desires to enhance its business performance (enrolment of students, profits, and revenue), then there is need for infusing market oriented activities in their pedagogy. Hence, the hypotheses H1 is accepted.

➲ **Learning Orientation and Individual Market Orientation :** The results of the study indicate a significant but slightly moderate relationship between learning orientation and individual market orientation of employees. The correlation between learning orientation and individual market orientation is 0.670 (refer to Table 2), indicating a strong and positive relationship between both the variables. The learning orientation appears to aid development of market oriented behaviour in individuals quite well (as observed in Table 3, b = 0.337, p <0.001). The study of standardized regression coefficients of the sample also are in alignment with the preceding research studies carried out by Slater and Narver (1995), Schlosser and Mcnaughton (2007), and Morgan (2004). The studies done in the past and the current ones indicate that learning culture in an organization should be nurtured and protected. The market oriented behaviour in an individual employee is developed only if he/she get an appropriate environment. It is upto the managers for developing such an environment. A manager can do it through the hiring and rewarding of those employees who are exhibiting learning agility. Schlosser and McNaughton (2007) quoted that "A strong learning orientation prompts employees to accept and adopt learning routines introduced by the company." Our research has identified market-oriented behaviours that organizations can apparently target and train employees to perform in their respective fields. Wood and Bandura (1989), Morgan (2004), and Schlosser and Mcnaughton (2007) suggested that learning agility in the employees can stimulate market oriented behaviour. Therefore, the hypothesis H2 is accepted.

➲ **Customer Contact and Individual Market Orientation :** The modus operandi of the financial organization is to continuously contact the prospective customer or existing customers. It empowers an employee to have fitting correspondence with the customer and know his needs, this thus permits workers of a financial organization to make moves to retain/build a customer. Customer contact has the strongest positive relationship with individual market orientation. The correlation between customer contact and individual market orientation is 0.809 (refer to Table 2). This indicates a strong and positive relationship between both variables.

The customer contact aids in evolution of market oriented behaviour in employees (as observed in the Table 3, $b = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$). The study of standardized regression coefficients of the sample threw up the same results as did the preceding research carried out by Schlosser and McNaughton (2007). Employees should contact their clients at least once a week (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2007). Eddleston, Kidder, and Litzky (2002) in their study stated that customers also expected a weekly meeting by his/her advisor/contact in the financial organization. Such activities incubate a sense of importance in customers and aids employees in developing market oriented behaviour. The findings of the present study indicate that an employee must not follow traditional methods while contacting a customer. An employee should always work further than his traditional obligations and should be contacting customers regularly. However, hurdles are created in the development of market oriented behaviours of an individual. Contacting customers is often criticized by those employees who are not working in the field or are not stationed at the front office (Langerak, 2001). Basically, it should be an organization's propaganda to motivate and reward employees to contact customers as much as they can. Ensuring certain actions will surely promote market oriented behaviour in employees. Therefore, the H3 is also accepted.

Consequences of Individual Market Orientation

Discussed here are the consequences of individual market orientation which are **(a)** work performance and, **(b)** future intentions.

➲ **Individual Market Orientation and Work Performance :** Work performance is significantly correlated to the individual's market orientation. The correlation between individual market orientation and work performance is

Table 4. Consequences of Individual Market Orientation: Standardized Regression Coefficients

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
	Work Performance	Future Intentions
Individual Market Orientation	0.588***	0.060
R^2	0.342	-0.002
N	196	196

***$p < .001$

0.588. It shows a strong and positive relationship between IMO and work performance (refer to Table 2). Market oriented behaviours in the employees result in enhanced work performance (as observed in the Table 4, $b = 0.588$, $p < 0.0001$). It indicates a strong impact of market orientated behaviours of an individual on work performance. The results of the study are similar to the studies carried out in the past by Ho et al. (2011), Green et al. (2005), and Baber, R., Upadhyay, Kaurav, and Baber, P. (2014). In all studies, individual market orientation was a positive predictor of both financial and marketing performance. Caruana, Ramaseshan, and Ewing (1998b) also found the same results, but their results were specifically related to a sector. Therefore, the hypothesis H4 is accepted.

➲ **Individual Market Orientation and Future Intentions :** The dependent variable - future intention is also positively correlated to individual market orientation. The correlation between individual market orientation and future intentions is 0.06. It shows a positive but very weak relationship between the two variables (refer to Table 2). It was observed in the study that market orientated behaviour of an individual does not have a positive relationship with individual market orientation (refer to Table 4, $b = -0.002$, $p > 0.05$). It indicates a negative impact of market orientated behaviours of an individual on his future intentions. Donavan, Brown, and Mowen (2004) in their study indicated that a strong individual market orientation creates internal benefits such as job satisfaction and commitment. But the negative impact of the individual market orientation is that often, employees with such attributes switch to other organizations for a higher remuneration. It also gives an indication that the employees working in financial organizations are not satisfied and lack in commitment. Therefore, the hypothesis H5 is rejected.

Conclusion

Even though market orientation is considered as an organizational trait, it is supported by the attitude and actions displayed by its employees. There cannot be development of market orientation or any strategy regarding implementation of market orientation until the employees of an organization are willing. Therefore, it is the responsibility of an individual employee that he must gather and assess the value of market information, and should willingly share it with other employees.

This research has identified important individual-level antecedents which organizations must reminisce while attempting to kindle organization wide market-oriented behaviours and also understand the consequences of individual market orientation. Kulkarni, Kumar, and Janakiram (2009) also mentioned in their study that learning should be part of organizational culture and leads to job satisfaction of an employee. An organization should focus on development of high matched psychological contracts with the employees so that their performance could be enhanced (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2009). Organizations should make it mandatory for employees to spend time with customers so they learn more about customer's needs and find new ways to fulfil them, thus being more market oriented individually.

Research Implications

After analysis of market oriented behaviour of an individual, organizations can provide direction to the policy makers for building competitive advantage over their competitors. We have considered employees throughout the organization. It is inferred from the study that by motivating an employee to adopt market oriented behaviour would result in employee retention and enhanced performance (Eddleston et al., 2002; Ho et al., 2011). It is also inferred that customer contact, learning agility, and psychological contracts also play an important role in development of market oriented behaviour in an individual. It is also observed that good-quality employee relationships with customers provide a base for development of stronger relationships which promote customer loyalty (Day, 2000).

This research endeavours to give a solution for the crevice which exists in the flow individual market orientation literature by improving the comprehension of employee's points of view and behaviours. It has helped towards its cause by testing the proposed connections between the aforementioned set of variables with individual market orientation. This research might be accommodating to both researchers and managers as it gives the schema to future studies and additionally gives market orientation methodologies to the experts, which might help them pick up an intense edge.

Managerial Implications

Marketing managers and the seniors can learn a lot from findings of this study. Firstly, about the psychological contract, a manager should always keep in mind that an employee has expectations from an organization. In the event that an association is not equipped to match up to an employee's set of desires, it could prompt disappointment and display of less market orientated conduct by the employee. Therefore, it is proposed to the managers that they ought to dependably select the mindset of an employee to know his/her desires from his association with the organization, and ought to attempt to fulfil the same. This will motivate employees to display market oriented behaviours. Taking in nimbleness has likewise being distinguished as a critical characteristic heading towards display of market oriented behaviours. It is a distinguishing proof of failures made in the past while working in an environment and correcting them.

It is suggested to managers to motivate market oriented behaviours in employees by providing them appropriate trainings and improvement programmes, thereby upgrading their capability. It is additionally proposed to the directors to begin practicing *kaizen* in their association. Prizes and rewards offered by organizations motivate employees to exhibit more market oriented behaviour (Baber et al., 2014). Customer contact is the last and the most essential precursor. It triggers market orientated behaviours in employees. More is the time spent with the customers, the more employees will think about them. This will force an employee to discover routines to fulfil the needs of the clients. An administrator ought to keep tabs on expanding time which an employee is going through with clients. A director ought to attempt to build intuitive sessions between the employees and the clients. It would trigger exchange of thoughts between both parties involved. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) stated that increased efforts in intelligence generation and greater level of responsiveness in an organization will lead to enhanced market oriented behaviour. Thus, a manager should focus on increasing the number of activities in which customers come in contact with employees.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

This research particularly explains about the difficulty in imaging the lower-level employees exposed to customers, in simpler words “the front end staff”. The researchers in this survey approached employees of financial organizations who were employed in more senior posts and back-end executives within their own organizations. In future research, all types of employees in financial organizations should be included, and there should be an increase in the sample size and response rate for the survey.

Future researchers should consider the influence of mentoring for enhancement of learning agility. More set of variables should be searched which affect development of market oriented behaviour in employees. Future studies should also include the quality of psychological contracts between employers and employees and its impact on the level of market orientation of an individual. Future studies should include sampling from other countries to validate the relationships found in the present study.

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