# An Analysis of the Determinants of Market Orientation Culture in the Lodges Industry in Zimbabwe

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**Abstract:** The study aimed at analysing the determinants of market orientation culture of the lodges businesses in Zimbabwe. The basis for carrying out the research were the observed challenges initially faced by some lodges, which included low customer satisfaction, low revenue generation than expected, low rate of visitor occupancy, poor facial features of some buildings and high customer complaints. Understanding the marketing orientation culture enable managers and employees of the lodges industry, to satisfy customers, gain competitive advantage and post positive long-term profits. The study was carried out using the positivist research philosophy that applied a cross-sectional survey of 207 quota sampled "customer" respondents who included local and foreign visitors of the lodges industry in Zimbabwe. The study found out that customer orientation had the strongest inter -item correlation with management commitment compared to other variables. Both management commitment and continuous improvement had significant regression parameters when related to customer orientation. The study also indicated that customer orientation had the weakest relationship to competitor orientation than other variables. Research results indicated that the overall market orientation was generally below standard, though customer orientation was generally in the acceptable range. The study recommend the lodges businesses in Zimbabwe put more effort in improving the performance of employees and management in their market orientation culture so as to improve all other dimensions of market orientation.

**Keywords:** Market orientation culture, customer orientation, marketing concept, management commitment, Inter-item correlation.

### I. Introduction

The need for upgrading customer service and welfare is more imperative in sectors like hotels and lodges which are positioned as 'hospitality firms' which have some connotations of caring and customer satisfaction. This culture of being market oriented need to be developed and be assimilated into lodges for them to compete effectively with other firms in the hospitality industry. Market-oriented culture, being composed of customer orientation, competitor-orientation and inter-department collaboration, was viewed as a group culture aimed at maintaining a high level of firm performance by effectively and efficiently executing actions required for gaining customer value (Narver and Slater, 1990). Marketing orientation has a more positive impact on the performance of any organisation which aims at gaining some competitive advantages (Brown and Maven, 2005).

Perreault and McCarthy, (2002) defined marketing orientation as trying to carry out and implement the marketing concept. Instead of just trying to get customers to buy what the firm has produced, a market-oriented firm tries to offer customers what they need. Three basic ideas are included in the definition of the marketing concept, namely; (1) customer satisfaction, (2) a total company effort, (3) and profitability. These ideas deserve more discussion for us to get some insight on how to improve the service quality performance lodges and their market orientation culture. This study became relevant for lodges industries to ensure that they have fully adopted the marketing culture required for meeting customer needs and fighting competition from new entrants and substitutes (Perrault and McCarthy, 2002). These lodges and hotels include Inn On Ruparara Lodge and Nyanga Rhodes Hotel in Nyanga, Hwange Safari Lodge and Ganda Lodge in Hwange, Ilala Lodge, Victoria Falls Safari Lodge and Rainbow AZambezi Hotel and Elephant Hills Hotel in Victoria Falls, Ritz Hotel and Great Zimbabwe Hotel in Masvingo, Matopo Hills Lodge and Bulawayo Rainbow Hotel in Bulawayo and at Chivero, Harare Safari Lodge, Hunyani Hills Hotel and many other lodges and hotels in greater Harare. Some lodges are run by Zimparks in the areas that include Chivero, Matopos, Hwange, Nyanga, Victoria Falls, and Kyle and other units located in various tourist attraction centres.

Most lodges were failing to meet their operational targets in terms of customer reach, financial results and general productivity. Though some elements of the core values seemed to be linked to market orientation culture, most lodges in Zimbabwe seem to be below the expected levels in terms of customer satisfaction.

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Meeting customer needs involves company operations focused on understanding, sharing and responding to customers through the marketing concept's eyes. Firms that adopt marketing orientation and implement the marketing concept are said to display a marketing orientation culture (Lamb et al, 2005). Walker et al, (2006) said market oriented firms had demonstrated that they are successful at maintaining a strong competitive position in their product-market segments. The importance of these lodges in the Zimbabwean hospitality industry is their ability to offer flexible leisure facilities to both local and foreign visitors.

These lodges had, however, generally failed to compete with the hotels and other hospitality facilities in their surrounding locations (Kotler and Keller, 2013). If they continue without adopting the marketing culture, they may face extinction and full replacement by other species in the hospitality industry. One of the possible reasons for this failure could be poor culture in terms of market orientation. To achieve higher revenue targets for sustaining their operations, the lodges need to be fully market oriented (Kumar, Subramanian and Strandholm, 2001; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). The key issues that define market orientation of a company include customer orientation, integrated marketing effort and mutually profitable exchange (Greenley, 1995).

Since companies that fail to adopt marketing and customer orientation cultures are likely to fail (Ruekert, 1992) in generating enough revenue and profits for their survival, there is need for separating customer orientation as one of the determinants of market orientation rather than an equal measure. The study, however, tested whether customer orientation could be a dependent variable while other variables remain the key determinants of both market orientation and customer orientation.

These lodges are failing to attract enough funds from customers for financing their functions and growth projects. One of the problems identified were low occupancy since some customers who book in those lodges were quickly leaving these lodges without enjoying the stay. These lodges could have adopted some bureaucratic ways of running their operations that showed no worry about innovation and competitor activities. The renovations done on the buildings and premises of some lodges were done without consulting customers and sometimes leading to further disappointment of customers. The waning market share in the hospitality sector, decreasing revenue levels and low visibility of the lodges are giving questions on whether the employees and managers have customers at heart and whether they are market oriented.

This study aimed at measuring the level of market orientation culture in the hospitality industry in Zimbabwe, taking a special focus on the determinants and components of the marketing cultural dimensions of the lodges industry.

## II. Statement of the Problem

The lodges business in Zimbabwe are facing challenges that are related to low customer satisfaction. These current challenges include low clientele base, low rate of occupancy, low revenue generation trends, poor facial outlook of the buildings and high customer complaints. Marketing operations and general visibility of the lodges industry seemed to be below the expected standards. This might point on the need to fully apply the market orientation culture in the lodges operations. Given the need to ensure full adoption of the market orientation culture, there is need to model the key determinants of market orientation culture so as to establish ways of managing customer satisfaction and performance of the lodges.

# III. Research Objectives

- 1. To analyse the inter-item correlation performance of the market orientation cultural dimensions.
- 2. To analyse the relationship between customer orientation performance and other market orientation dimensions of the lodges businesses in Zimbabwe.
- 3. To develop a model for measuring market orientation culture of the lodges businesses in Zimbabwe.

## **IV.** Literature Review

A customer-centred company, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2013),is a company that focus on customer developments in designing its marketing strategies and delivering superior value to its target customers. This means marketing intelligence, customer databases, marketing research and, data analysis tools and procedures are central for supporting any customer driven company. Since customer orientation philosophy put customer needs and expectations at the centre of the organisational function and provide greater focus on understanding customer needs and delivering the right products and services (Kolter and Keller, 2006), this leads to long term survival of the firm. The study also covers the study on management commitment of the lodges industry in Zimbabwe. Three components which were used to describe management commitment were the affective attachment, the perceived cost associated with leaving the company and the obligation to remain with the company (Gunlu, 2010). Management commitment is also measured by the level and involvement of top management in mission and vision development, strategy development approach and implementation programmes.

Employee focus and orientation levels of lodges was also measured in this study. The human resource factor in lodges is represented by both back stage and front line employees. It is misleading for an organisation to only focus on satisfying external customers and ignoring the employees (internal customers) who make those external customers realise their needs (Gounaris, 2008). A firm's employees represent the 'people' part of the services marketing mix that are critical for ensuring customers are satisfied. Employee orientation is a culture of ensuring that employees are satisfied and supported through top management commitment in employee motivation and allocating resources and assets. Some of the causes of employee dissatisfaction include role ambiguity, work overload, job mismatch, lack of empowerment, lack of management commitment and role tension (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011). Satisfied employees (internal customers) will also pass on that satisfaction to external customers. Unsatisfied employees are generally bored, cold, less responsive to customer needs and are customer repellent in nature. Internal marketing will lead to job satisfaction, employee motivation and a strong psychological contract between the organisation and its employees (Brown and Peterson, 1993).

Co-ordinated marketing effort is a highly relevant dimension for measuring market orientation of the lodges market in Zimbabwe. Kumar, Subramanian and Srandholm(2002) recommended the inclusion of the following statements in measuring the extent to which co-ordinated services marketing effort is applied. These include having service units working together to meet customers' needs, service units sharing business information, having integrated strategies between different service units, service units working together to offer value, and different service units sharing resources with each other. Having a well knitted, co-ordinated, internally networked and integrated service organisation produces high quality service and consumer satisfaction. Internal co-ordination of employees involves making them maintain some value-creation chains of 'internal supplier-customer' nature (Gounaris, 2008). Ability to benchmark, follow-up and analyse behaviour and activities of competitors is part of market orientation culture that need to be adopted by lodges and other hospitality firms. Competitors can be classified as defenders, prospectors, analysers and reactors by Miles and Snow (1978). Kotler and Keller (2013) placed competitors into market leaders, market followers, market challengers and market nichers. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2013), competitor analysis is defined as the process of identifying key competitors, assessing their objectives, strategies, strengths and weaknesses, and reaction patterns; and selecting which competitors to attack or avoid. In competitor orientation, Kotler and Armstrong (2013) identified two steps which start with competitor analysis. This is defined as the process of identifying, assessing, and selecting key competitors. The second step is developing competitive marketing strategies that strongly position the company against competitors and give it the greatest possible competitive advantage.

The more one firm's strategy is similar to another firms' strategy, the more the two companies compete. Kotler and Keller (2013), Kotler and Armstrong (2013) and Jobber (2010), all seems to give more value on Porter's Five forces, stakeholder mapping and SWOT analysis which also include some competitor analysis. Kotler and Keller (2013:56) also recommended the use of benchmarking for studying 'best practice of other companies so as to improve performance of the case study firm. The firm's task is to examine its costs and performance in each value-creating activity and look for ways to improve it.

Continuous improvement is the enhancement process used by an organisation to find the best ways of satisfying its customers (Harrel and Frazer, 1999:53). Continuous improvement is one of the critical components of total quality management (TQM) that was developed by the Japanese and given the name 'Kaizen'. Though TQM is also known for customer orientation, employee orientation, management commitment and zero defects, its emphasis on improving and upgrading systems (Kaizen) is central for ensuring a culture of being customer driven is entrenched in the hearts of both employees and managers. The concept of continuous improvement is based on the assumption that continually striving to reach higher and higher standards in every part of the organisation will provide a series of incremental gains that will build superior performance. Continuous improvement measurement was covered by Tomaskova(2009) by his evaluation of whether the company offer products that reflect the latest demands and wishes of customers, responding fast to the market events of competitors, and on implementing the acquired information to the firm's decisions.

The conceptual framework for analysing the determinants of market orientation culture in the lodges industry put market orientation at the centre and being linked to customer orientation, management commitment, employee orientation, co-ordinated marketing effort, competitor analysis and continuous improvement. Relationships between these variables were also tested. Customer orientation was tested as a dependent variable since it is usually equated to market orientation.

# V. Research Methodology

The empirical study on the determinants of market orientation culture in the lodges industry in Zimbabwe was carried out using the positivist research philosophy that applied a cross-sectional survey of 207 quota sampled visitors, customers and guests who visited the lodges industry in Zimbabwe in the past 5 years.

The study initially targeted some quotas of minimum of 130 women and 130 men, focusing on those who had visited the lodges more than once, but the achieved gender quotas were only 81 women and 126 men. Quota sampling is usually useful when time is limited, when a sampling frame is not available, and when the research budget is very tight. An element of judgmental sampling was also used for choosing the guests with more experience with the Zimbabwean lodges as the respondents were believed to have knowledge around the subject of the study. Results show a high KMO value of 0.812 which was greater than 0.500 that indicated that the sample of 207 respondents was adequate for factor analysis and other statistical tests. The study used a questionnaire that contain closed ended question items and open ended questions. The types of closed ended questions were of Likert scale that rated perceptions on market orientation issues in the 'strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree' continuum. The objectives covered by the questionnaire include customer orientation levels, management commitment to customer satisfaction, employee orientation, coordination levels, competitor orientation and continuous improvement of the lodges in Zimbabwe.

On reliability, Creswell (2009:233) defined it as a measure of whether scores to items on an instrument are internally consistent, stable over time and whether there was consistency in test administration and scoring. An overall reliability value of 0.942 Cronbach's Alpha was established and is acceptable since it is above the 0.80 benchmark. Validity refers to the appropriateness and usefulness of the specific inferences made from a test score. The inclusion of customer orientation levels, management commitment to customer satisfaction, employee orientation, coordination levels, competitor orientation and continuous improvement is generally valid for assessing the market orientation levels. In collecting data, the researcher dropped questionnaires at the respondents' lodgings for them to complete and then picked them later. In drop and pick method, there is no interviewer bias, since the respondent is assumed to be answering by themselves. The face to face survey method involves the interviewer asking the respondent questions and then enters the answers on a prepared questionnaire. The face to face survey was conducted for guests who had challenges in writing their responses and were available for face to face. Personal interviewing is flexible and enables probing for more detail. Also, the interviewer was able to collect non verbal data and can use visual material for reference. Quantitative analysis that involved use of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software package to capture and produce numerical data was applied in the study. The quantitative output produced include frequencies, cross tabulations, mean values, hypothesis tests, correlation analysis, regression coefficients and other analysis tools. Tables were used to present data in figures using cells where descriptive rows and columns meet. In those tables, original data was kept intact and end users were provided with organised and structured information. The discussion of results involved description of phenomena, explanation of results and outlining the usefulness of results. Relationships among determinants of market orientation culture were examined in the analysis and discussion process.

#### VI. Presentation and Discussion of Results

The discussion of the market orientation research results is covered through the inter-correlation analysis, mean value analysis and regression analysis.

# **6.1 Inter-Factor Correlation Analysis**

Barttlets test for sphericity was done and it was found out that the data can further be analysed using factor analysis. Principal components were extracted from each of the major components using Varimax method. The principal components were then tested for pair wise correlation at 5% level of significance. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficients are shown in the Table I below. The correlation between the variables and dimensions for measuring market orientation culture gives some direction of the responses and stability of the respondents involved.

Customer Management Employee Co-ordinate Competitor Continuous 1. Customer 2. Management .593 3. Employee .803 1 .547 .648 4. Co-ordinate .<mark>697</mark> .540 5. Competitor .654 .741.665 6. Continuous .682 .631 .608 .535

 Table I: Inter-Item Correlation Matrix For Market Orientation Components

**Source: Survey Results (2016)** 

The variables that had strongest correlation include management and employees (r=0.803), management and customer (0.726), coordination and competitor orientation (0.741), and employee and coordination (0.697). The strong correlation value between management commitment and employee orientation

is possible since behaviour and commitment of managers is reflected on how they treat and manage employee issues. Management commitment and customer orientation also demonstrate a higher value since management's behaviour and resource allocation approaches could affect the value delivered to customers. The managers are also the custodian of key organisational cultural orientations.

The weak and low inter-correlation values were established between continuous improvement and coordination (r=0.535), competitor orientation and customer orientation (r=0.540), coordination effort and customer orientation (r=0.547) and employee orientation and customer orientation (r=0.593). Co-ordination among teams could have been achieved by partly sacrificing development of new ideas for improving business processes. That is possible since it has the lowest inter correlation value of (r=0.535). Competitor orientation and customer orientation were also found to have a lower correlation coefficient in the range of other values. This is possible since competitor oriented companies spend their energies fighting competitors rather than satisfying customers. The fighting spirit will make the firm's employees concentrate on how to outwit competitors with less emphasis on satisfying customers. Employee orientation and customer orientation (r=0.593) had a lower value since some 'stakeholder-respondents' could have thought that satisfying customers and satisfying employees are different practices for developing marketing orientation cultures. While those differences were noticed among the various inter-correlations, all the values are generally above 0.500. This shows that the market orientation culture in the lodges was generally well developed, though not attractive. Another way of connecting these variables could be achieved by considering 'customer orientation' as a dependent variable, with the other variables as independent variables. See diagram below (Fig I) for such considerations.

#### **Customer Orientation and Correlation with Other Dimensions**

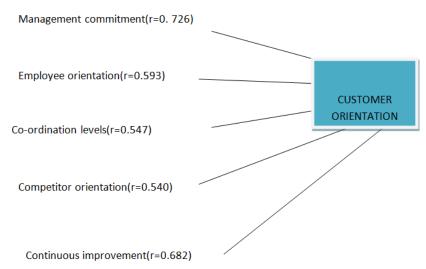


Fig I: Customer Orientation and Correlation with Other Dimensions

The diagram shows that management commitment is more associated with customer orientation behaviour of the firm, with a value of (r-=0.726). Continuous improvement was the second most closely associated dimension with customer orientation (r=682). Since all these variables are above the 0.500 benchmark, we can conclude that improving the performance of these variables will upgrade customer orientation and market orientation of the lodges in Zimbabwe.

## 6.2 The Mean Value Analysis of the Market Orientation Culture

The table below shows the summarised version of the market orientation sub-variables. The mean values of each variable are put in the table. The grand mean is also shown at the bottom of the table.

	<u> </u>		
Market Orientation Culture Variables	Overall means		
Customer orientation	2.947		
Management commitment	3.058		
Employee orientation	3.057		
Coordination levels	3.022		
Competitor orientation	3.038		
Continuous improvements	3.147		
Overall Grand Mean	3.045		

**Table II:** Measure of Marketing Orientation

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Customer orientation culture was more significant than other market orientation cultures. Coordination levels (m=3.02) and competitor orientation levels (m=3.04) were found to be generally more attractive than other variables. The lodges were found to be generally weakest in the area of continuous improvement area. The MEC<sup>4</sup>-model for measuring market orientation culture can be established from these results. The MEC<sup>4</sup> Model is represented by Management, Employee, Customer, Competitor, Continuous improvement, Coordination levels. These are shown by the diagram below.

#### **Spidergram Showing Dimensions**

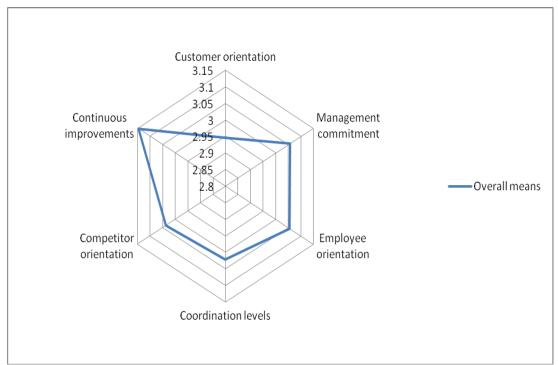


Fig II: Spidergram Showing Performance of Market Orientation Dimensions

The diagram shows that 'customer orientation' is close to the centre of the spidergram and this might point to its importance in estimating the market orientation culture of lodges and other hospitality firms. Given the use of a large sample of 207 respondents, with a KMO sample adequacy value of 0.812 and overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.942, we recommend service firms and hospitality firms in particular to use the  $\text{MEC}^4$  as a functional and operational model for evaluating their market orientation cultures.

#### 6.3 Regression Analysis of Market Orientation Determinants

The following tables show SPSS linear regression model summary, the ANOVA table and the regression coefficient table. The model summary table shows whether the overall model was adequately fitted. While the ANOVA table shows the model variations, the regression coefficients table shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Model	R										
	K	R	Adjusted	Std.	Error	Change Statistics					
		Squar	R Square	of the		R Square	F Change	df	df2	Sig.	F
		e		Estimate		Change		1		Change	
1	.786 <sup>a</sup>	0.617	0.608	0.6264	2236	0.617	64.794	5	201	0.000	
•					U		•			•	
		Table	IV: The AN	OVA <sup>a</sup> 7	Table f	or Market Or	rientation M	easures	1		
Model			Sum of Squa	ares	Df	Mear	n Square	F		Sig.	
1	Regressi	on	127.127		5	25.42	25	6	4.794	.000b	
	Residual		78.873		201	.392					
_	Total		206.000		206						
•					•	•				•	

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Model		Unstandardi	zed Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		В	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	-1.003E- 013	.044		.000	1.000
	Management commitment	.541	.079	.541	6.846	(.000)
	Employee orientation	117	.080	117	-1.451	.148
	Internal coordination	.116	.072	.116	1.625	.106
	Competitor orientation	062	.072	062	858	.392
	Continuous improvement	.386	.060	.386	6.448	(.000)

The model had an F statistic of 64.794 (sig.0.000) that shows that the fitted model was adequate. The R-squared of the model was found to be 0.617 implying that 61.7% of the variability observed customer orientation could be explained by the other variables. Only two regression parameters were found to be significantly different from zero which were; management commitment and continuous improvement which had values of 0.541 and 0.386, respectively. This has implications that an improvement in management commitment to customer satisfaction will bring about a positive change in customer orientation, and likewise an upgrade in continuous improvement aspects will also bring about a positive change to customer orientation cultural aspects.

## VII. Conclusions

The key findings conclude that customer orientation was established as a moderating factor and had the most acceptable levels of market orientation performance in the study. Customer orientation was found to be more closely related to management commitment than other variables as based on the inter-item correlation analysis. As a dependent variable customer orientation was found to be closely related to management commitment and continuous improvements under the regression analysis. Employee orientation and management commitment were found to have the largest inter-item correlation value in the lodges business. All inter-item correlation values were found to be large and above 0.500 benchmark for all the six variables used in the study. This confirms the validity and reliability of using these dimensions and the MEC<sup>4</sup> Model for measuring market orientation culture in the lodges industry and related service firms.

# VIII. Recommendations

The researcher recommends the development of a customer –oriented policy which covers customer handling, customer satisfaction, customer retention, customer needs and wants and customer consultation as key dimensions. The researcher recommends that top management motivate and reward employees effectively and make proper allocation of resources in their different areas of operations, and for all departments, sections and units to work as a team. The researcher recommends that the firms in lodges industry should carry out a thorough study of its competitors and craft some informed competitive strategies. The study recommends future researchers to analyse the possible marketing strategies that can be used to achieve market orientation culture in the lodges industry in Zimbabwe.

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