

Qualitative insights into antecedents and consequences of Market Orientation in the Moroccan hospitality industry

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Abstract: This paper seeks to explore the nature of Market Orientation that exists in the hospitality industry, by identifying its antecedents and consequences. Following a qualitative research design, fourteen managers within the Moroccan hospitality sector are engaged in discussions to share their perceptions on the prevalent subject. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, and coded using NVIVO 11. Similar responses were identified from a prepared data matrix. The results were presented through a narrative approach outlining the frequency of respondents' discourse. The analysis demonstrates consistency with the existing literature, highlighting the significance of key elements: Hotel managers treat Market Orientation as a usual business strategy towards two main environmental components customers and competitors, that share certain properties but differ significantly on others. Furthermore, the study identifies four antecedents (Top management attitude, HR management, strategy declination, and internal process management) that support Market Orientation implementation. Finally, valuing Market Orientation has tremendous potential for improving performance in terms of profitability, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and requirement compliance.

Keywords: Market orientation; hotels; antecedents; consequences.

Digital Object Identifier (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11235467>



1. Introduction

Morocco's economic progress is deeply dependent on the tourism industry. In 2019, tourism made a significant contribution of MAD 81.4 billion to the country's gross domestic product (GDP)[1]. The hospitality sector, the cornerstone of this industry, has a broad range of varied elements. Firstly, the accommodation classifications are a mix of domestic independent hotels and international hotel chains with their associated brands, predominantly located in major cities. Secondly, the sector serves a multitude of customer demographics and a wide range of destination options and experiences. According to Mordor Intelligence's study about Morocco's hospitality industry [2], it is expected the growing of market size from USD 0.81 billion in 2024 to USD 1.12 billion by 2029.

These variables and parameters play a significant role in influencing fluctuations in hotel performance, as they are fundamental criteria that help determine how hotels can implement and translate their strategies in front of the competition. Indeed, to remain competitive in today's rapidly changing markets, hotels have to be more flexible and innovative to meet an increasingly complex demand (Fernandez et al., 2021). Especially being hampered by the unexpected crises (COVID-19), hospitality companies have to search for opportunities to be more attentive to environmental changes, find solutions to the behaviors of market actors, and gain sustained advantage. Being market-oriented is the most appropriate strategy to be more informed about the environmental sphere, and respond to market uncertainties resulting in their survival and success. This dynamism may center on Market Orientation, which is involved with market intelligence, and consequently good marketing actions.

According to an analysis report of a recent study about the hospitality market in Morocco¹, several factors are expected to pose threats to the sector's growth. Implementing tourism policies poses challenges that hinder market growth, especially during governmental transitions, inadequate workforce training, and a lack of comprehensive market monitoring and future planning initiatives toward customers that become more aware of their preferences. As a result, it seems interesting to investigate Market Orientation practices, their antecedents, and implications within the present context.

It's worth noting that the present study represents the first investigation into this subject in Morocco. Aligning with Jaworski and Kohli's statement, *"It could be argued that the Kohli & Jaworski approach is too abstract and broad. The framework does not work the same way operationally for all types of businesses."* [4] Conducted using qualitative methods, it aims to understand how Market Orientation can address the challenges faced by the hospitality sector in Morocco. Within this respect, the research questions of the present study are determined as follows: How do hotel managers perceive Market Orientation? What are its key components? What factors influence its implementation and what are its implications on hotel operations and activity?

After the introductory section, the subsequent part will explore a literature review, shedding light on the concept of Market Orientation as exposed in current academic literature. This will be succeeded by a detailed presentation of the research methods utilized. Following this, the subsequent section will present the main research findings. The final section will entail a discussion of results, limitations, and final considerations.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Market orientation

The concept of Market Orientation has been recognized as one of the most comprehensive, practical, and suitable managerial practices [5] used to characterize firms whose primary focus is satisfying the customer first, as opposed to optimizing production or maximizing sales at the top of priorities. [6]. The concept has been emerged at the beginning of the '90s within two approaches: Firstly, the behavioral

¹ <https://www.technavio.com/report/hospitality-market-industry-in-morocco-analysis>

one of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) [7] identified Market Orientation as a cornerstone of the marketing concept and defined it through three main elements: generation of market intelligence, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it. Market intelligence refers to the collection of both customers' current and future needs, the impact of governmental regulation, competitors, technology, and other environmental pressures. Intelligence dissemination refers to the process and extent to which information is exchanged both vertically and horizontally and how it is shared within the organization. The last dimension, responsiveness, involves the planning and implementation of marketing programs. Secondly, the cultural approach of Narver and Slater (1990) [8], considered Market Orientation as an organizational culture that induces behaviors toward the market to create and maintain superior customer value while considering the interest of other key stakeholders. It involves behavioral components: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination. Narver & Slater's conception seems to be more complete and considers environmental components that have a direct impact on the organization. As a result, it becomes quite likely to be seen as a combined approach where culture and behavior coexist.

2.2 Antecedents of market orientation

Previous research has identified a significant number of antecedents that influence Market Orientation. Jaworski and Kohli's seminal work [9] inspired the majority of studies conducted in different countries. In their meta-analysis, Kirca et al. [10] found support for these antecedents at various levels, including top management emphasis, departmental conflict and connectedness, and organizational systems such as formalization, centralization, and market-based reward systems. However, other antecedents have been experienced. Based on the literature:

- Wasmer et al. [11] found that institutional innovativeness plays the largest role in the adoption of Market Orientation within the higher education sector in the United States, overshadowing the effects of institution size and source of funding.
- Pulendran et al. [12] observed that top management factors, organizational systems, and rewards system orientation foster Market Orientation across various sectors in Australia, except for interdepartmental conflict and formalization.
- Flavian and Lozano [13] found that high-level management and interdepartmental dynamics have positive effects on Market Orientation within the public university system in Spain, while organizational systems, characterized by a concentration of power in the department, do not contribute positively.
- Mahmoud et al. [14] discovered that senior management factors consistently shape the direction of Market Orientation in the pharmaceutical industry in Ghana, opposite to the influences of interdepartmental dynamics, organization-wide systems, and external factors.
- Guo et al. [15] identified that turbulent and dynamic market conditions foster the adoption of Market Orientation across various industries in India, including software, hotel, engineering, consumer goods, oil and gas, and steel and energy.
- Brower and Nath [16] demonstrated that having marketing representation in the top management team and a CEO with marketing experience directly contribute to increasing Market Orientation in public firms in the United States.
- Mostafiz et al. [17] highlighted that dynamic managerial capability specifically attributes such as managerial social capital and managerial cognition of entrepreneurs, enhances the Market Orientation process within the export manufacturing industry in Bangladesh.

To sum up, the antecedents of Market Orientation vary across different sectors and countries, with factors such as innovation, top management factors, interdepartmental dynamics, organizational

systems, external environmental conditions, marketing representation in top management, and dynamic managerial capability.

2.3 Consequences of market orientation

The literature suggests that organizations that manage their relationship with the environment tend to be more performant than their competitors [18]. Consequences of Market Orientation suggest several key outcomes for organizations that adopt this approach:

Improving performance: Market-oriented firms tend to achieve superior financial performance, including higher profitability, sales growth, and market share. Identifying and capitalizing on market opportunities leads to increased revenue and competitiveness. [8]

Sustainable Competitive Advantage: Market Orientation helps firms build sustainable competitive advantages by aligning their strategies with market needs and preferences. By continuously monitoring and responding to changes in the market environment, these firms can maintain their competitive edge and outperform rivals over time. [19]

Enhanced Innovation: Market Orientation fosters a culture of innovation within organizations. By continuously gathering and analyzing market information, firms can identify unmet customer needs and develop innovative products and services to address them. This innovation capability allows organizations to stay close to competitors and adapt to changing market conditions. [20]

Higher Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty: Market-oriented firms prioritize understanding and meeting customer needs and preferences. As a result, they tend to have higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. By delivering superior value to customers, these firms can build strong relationships and retain customers over the long term. [9] [20] [21] [22]

Employee benefits: empowerment, social and psychological benefits, pride, and strong commitment. [9]

Making good marketing decisions: Lambin et al. [23] find it even more legitimate to validate the link between market orientation and performance as a means of proving the utility of marketing in an organization. Generally, companies with a strong market orientation are better able to adapt to changes occurring in their environment.

3. Research method

In reason of its exploratory nature, a qualitative research approach was employed to facilitate the collection of information through verbal means. The study focused on hotels located in Morocco. A “field mapping” was established based on a professional network site. The selection of participants was based on two criteria outlined by Pires [24]: diversification and saturation. Internally diversifying our selection sample increases the likelihood of obtaining varied perspectives and realities. The second criterion, saturation, involves determining the number of interviews needed until no new information or topics emerge from the data. Adhering to these principles, fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with a group of hotel industry managers. (table 1)

The study was carried out over six months. The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 1), as a method for collecting data, included a set of general questions, to determine the degree to which hotels are intelligent towards their market components, the antecedents that foster or discourage its implementation, and its implications on hotel results.

Table 1: qualitative research sample

Code	Position	Classification	City
R #1	General Manager	3*	Casablanca
R #2	General Manager	4*	Casablanca
R #3	Quality Manager	Luxury	Essaouira
R #4	Sales Manager	Luxury	Marrakesh
R #5	Sales Manager	4*	Casablanca
R #6	Quality Manager	5*	Marrakesh
R #7	Quality Manager	5*	Agadir
R #8	Quality Manager	5*	Marrakesh
R #9	General Manager	5*	Casablanca
R #10	Quality Manager	3*	Casablanca
R #11	Quality Manager	5*	Casablanca
R #12	Sales Manager	5*	Casablanca
R #13	Sales Manager	5*	Marrakesh
R #14	Sales Manager	5*	Marrakesh

Among the interviews conducted, a notable minority (2) highlighted certain limitations of the semi-directive approach: some respondents provided answers in bursts or extremely briefly. Several steps were taken to analyze transcribed data. Once the transcripts were implemented, the texts were read. The goal is to involve seeking an internal understanding to establish a connection with our initial inquiries. Nvivo 11 is used for coding and categorizing the corpus. Responses were categorized based on similar answers from the respondents for the same question and frequency was calculated for each same answer. The research results were presented narratively, The purpose of using this approach was to provide an insight into the hotel market orientation of the respondent companies.

4. Main findings

4.1 Market orientation adoption

The interviews revealed that hotels are perfectly managed by their market. Hotels' strategies are based on understanding the environment to react to customer preferences and competitors' actions. It seems evident in the statement provided by one of the interviewees: “[...] *It's all about unifying a set of customer and competitor information on several fronts to help us know if we could continue with the current strategy or do something else*”. R #14. In other words, the extent to be more innovative than competitors is confirmed. “*Hotels will need to gather market information about the needs of guests, as well as the abilities of their competitors. By doing this, the hotel will be able to stop all offers without value and include those with added value*”. R #3

These opinions emphasize the importance of understanding the environment, and demonstrate the omnipresence of Market Orientation in hotels, described in terms of two ways: Firstly, the majority defines it as a managerial strategy based on the implementation of rigorous collecting and analyzing information procedures from customers and competitors to instruct decisions regarding the market. “*Market Orientation is described as a system of collecting and analyzing information at the level of our market actors to be intelligent and to be on the same level as our competitors or to exceed them.*” R #7 At the same time, Managers were also probed that culture is an important determinant of market behaviors. Clearly, a hotel manager stated: “[...] *It's an organizational culture that shapes employee behaviors and gives them a code of conduct for the marketplace.*” R #12

Going a little further, two managers interviewed equated Market Orientation with customer orientation. The role of other stakeholders is partially excluded. In their opinion, competitive advantage is the production of superior value constantly renewed for customers' sources of profits and losses. Giving the following example: “[...]currently, most hotels consider customers as the most important factor to which any marketing should be directed. More specifically, a market-oriented hotel concentrates all its business activities on meeting the needs of its customers. To do this, the hotel spends a lot of time and seeks to meet the needs and expectations of customers through implementation marketing strategies”. R #13

4.2 Market orientation components

In-depth, interviews revealed two common elements of Market Orientation (Figure 1)

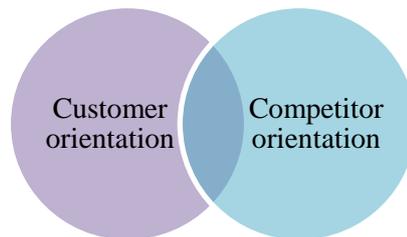


Figure 1: Hotel market orientation

4.2.1 Customer orientation

On this aspect, initially, our panel identified the primary purpose of their establishment, conceiving marketing strategies based on customer information acquisition, continuous understanding of the customer value chain, and detection of latent and expressed customer needs. A hotel manager commented on this issue: “Customers are omnipresent in the design of our strategies. We are committed to providing unparalleled, considerate, and personalized service, and every customer who receives a warm welcome feels appreciated.” R #14.

Subsequently, interviews uncovered that a customer-oriented hotel manifests in these various forms. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: customer orientation practices

The result indicates that eleven respondents (78 percent of the total), suggested consultation of booking websites as a form of customer orientation. these respondents believe that consulting booking websites is an effective strategy for orienting customers, in terms of providing information, facilitating bookings, or enhancing the overall customer experience. “We aim to retain our existing guests and increase the number of new guests through a distinctive marketing approach guided by the right information collected from websites and the right analysis. Quantitative strategic analyses identify the most

profitable customer categories per ex, enabling our hotel to diversify the facets of these marketing strategies” R #11

Ten respondents proposed that measuring customer satisfaction is a form of Market Orientation (70 percent of the total). As R #4 stated, “*Customer satisfaction gives a fairly clear idea of the efficiency of internal procedures, it is a reflection of what we do.*” Information coming from satisfaction measurement is quickly analyzed and distributed within the various departments to adjust hotel offerings to market demands. Furthermore, Ten respondents highlight the importance of handling claims (70 percent of the total).

With 65 percent of the total, the design of social media strategies to track customer opinions is the way of obtaining information and the speed of obtaining the required information has undergone tremendous changes, so communication with customers has also inevitably changed to social media. As R #8 noted “*We use surveys in social networks: It has become an easy tool to develop this intelligence, we asked users on Instagram about the Moroccan lifestyle. As a result, our hotel has just adopted a new visual identity and signature based on this survey. A positioning that wants to represent a Moroccan “art de vivre” both plural and complex*”.

Nine hotel managers pointed out that establishing studies to identify future and current customer needs is prominent. It’s a process that starts from the customer's reservation until departure. “*We share with our group the feedback of our customers, who launch surveys at all barrier hotels to define the current and future needs of customers. We have launched a solid support service for our clients. As part of their stay, the service starts from the time of booking the staff in charge, sends them a request about their preferences, and what they would like to see in the room as soon as they arrive both in terms of scent, and both in terms of floral decoration, in the receptions (sweet, savory, etc.) and here the staff has the role of welcoming and accompanying the guests, possibly helping them to store their belongings as they wish, organizing their reservations (restaurants or spas) and generally organizing their stay » R #6*

The purpose is to better understand the customer. “*The main purpose of these surveys is to understand the customer’s mind. Application of surveys on an ongoing basis gives the advantage in understanding customers’ needs.*” R #14

These surveys also allow the development of customer segmentation strategies. “*Our goal is to retain our existing customers and increase the number of new customers through a distinct marketing approach guided by accurate information and analysis. The quantitative strategic analyses identify the categories of customers for example the most profitable, allowing our hotel to diversify the facets of these marketing strategies” R #11*

Ultimately, with 50 percent of the total, effective interaction among hotel staff represents a form of customer orientation. Considering the nature of the services industry, customers often rely on the behavior of service employees when assessing service quality. As a result, focusing strictly on customers goes beyond the “traditional” strategy and must be supported by changes in human resources management. Staff seems to be an indispensable link in the chain of “service meeting-communication – information gathering-Sharing- Reaction-satisfaction-hotel loyalty”. “*Our employees (the receptionists...), are those who come into direct contact with customers and are by default the first-degree information collectors.*” R #12

4.2.2. Competitor orientation

Within this aspect, the interviews demonstrate the strategic role of competition. This is shown as follows: “*To understand the market even better, we recognize that there is competition and that it is advantageous to “compare ourselves” to confreres, as well as to evaluate their proposed services and their strategies to rethink our strategic thinking. This is a competitive intelligence that is based on many aspects: How do our guests compare to other hotels? We are also trying to develop an understanding of our competitors not only about their rates but also about the quality of service they provide.*” R# 14

Following that, interviews revealed that a competitive orientation presents itself in these diverse manifestations.

65 percent of the total adopts a process of research and exploitation of information concerning competitor’s activities, this process is called competitive intelligence as R# 7 advances “*We have a research and competitive intelligence department whose objective is to be on the lookout for all the innovations and practices implemented in the market.*” In the theory, competitive intelligence involves gathering and analyzing information about competitors, market trends, and industry developments to gain insights and make informed decisions to maintain or improve competitive advantage. In practical terms, how do the behaviors demonstrate themselves? In the table below, competitive intelligence practices are cited by our sample interviewed.

Table 2: competitive intelligence practices

Occupancy Rate Sharing	R# 1	<i>“Every morning, we communicate the occupancy rate of other hotels and if the occupancy rate was lower throughout the week for example, we need to know what’s wrong... and document the reason especially since this is not a market trend.”</i>
	R #9	<i>“There are moments of collaboration between our competitors through the communication of occupancy rates every morning. This is a basic source for decision-making. Their strategies are reviewed but periodically.”</i>
	R #4	<i>“competitive monitoring on different levels: the occupancy rate as a watch is tolerated between hotels, the Quality Managers or the Marketing Managers of the different hotels are called every morning, it is declarative.”</i>
Analysis nature of competitors' service offers	R# 14	<i>“Studying our competitors means evaluating them on the following criteria: Prices, Product & Experience, Level of Services, and distribution canals”</i>
Hotel tour	R# 5	<i>“This is done monthly; we visit a hotel of our competitors and we can even spend the night there to conduct an evaluation of their services and draw their failures which would be our next strengths.”</i> <i>“The hotel tour is also tolerated...”.</i>
	R #4	
Social media monitoring	R #4	<i>“Other watches apply by customer comments on forums or see their websites to see where our colleagues (Competitors) arrived. ”</i>
Analysis of competitors strengths and weaknesses	R# 12	<i>“... It is necessary to analyse the strengths and strategies of competitors and their weaknesses as well. I would say that our hotel competes with others on things like branding, service design, prices, quality of accommodation, staff behaviour, and strategic hotel locations. And these are the points we try to focus on in our strategies”</i>
	R# 11	<i>“... These analyses also include controlling for competitive factors that may influence future customer needs and preferences. Among the aspects we control over non-competitors are their suppliers, their Top Management team, and their participation in programs and conferences.”</i>

Eleven of the respondents confirmed that the reactions faced by competitors are less threatening but more at least harmful to the competitors. R# 12 advances “*We analyze this competitive action, then we try to rethink a new strategy to differentiate ourselves. However, as an organization, what sets our hotel*

apart from other major international hotel operators is our market experience, expertise, and relationships with our customers, who trust us and always see the image we can generate.”

Some use innovation as one of the most effective barriers to competition and rapid market developments by defining a new repositioning. We note that competitive orientation dynamics are sources of managerial innovation that contribute to competitive advantage. *“We try to innovate, rethink, and offer different services that don’t exist in the market.”* R# 10

In parallel, other hotels can retain in their identity by improving their current position *“In the case of our brand, we try to differentiate ourselves by maintaining our identity through a unique atmosphere, uniformity of service, and a range of good quality services. Some use technological innovation through the introduction of technology throughout the client’s stay process to outpace their competitors.”* R# 13

Analyzing competitors' strengths and weaknesses is also a form of competitive orientation with 40 percent of the total. It’s crucial to understand the hotel's position in the market and identify areas for improvement and strategic advantage. According to responses, this form starts by identifying competitors and gathering information on their products, services, marketing strategies, and market presence. Strengths such as product quality, brand reputation, and innovation are highlighted, as well as weaknesses such as product gaps, customer experience shortcomings, and operational inefficiencies. *“Our Marketing department conducts a SWOT analysis to identify areas of competitive advantage and potential threats, we can be informed about how can we make decisions and how to position in the marketplace.”* R# 3

4.3 Market orientation antecedents

The results indicate that the total of the panel suggested leadership is one of the antecedents that may encourage Market Orientation in hotels. As noted by one of the respondents *“Our leaders always encourage us to be creative in trying to study the details of the market to ensure that we actively take advantage of this intelligence. They demand transparency about the data they collect and take responsibility for what they do with it, as well as their partners”* R #11. For the leader, simply expressing the importance of this approach is sufficient., and it is up to the rest of the hotel to assume this direction. And then: *“Being market-oriented is a top management decision”* R #8

Half of our panel stressed that human resources are another important factor in determining the implementation of this process. In this regard, R #13 illustrates this point: *“[...] HR management system also influences market orientation process although the intensity of the effect varies. HR have a greater influence on the quality of information collection and processing practices. In addition, we do better when we work collaboratively with everyone, and we respect the contribution and importance of our internal stakeholders.”*

Or R #8 illustrates this point: *“For visitors, direct interaction with them could encourage the collection, and, as a result, employees are convinced that they need to have client-focused skills, sometimes at the expense of prior job skills.”*

Then come, in the same position the factors: *“Declination of strategy”* and *“internal organization of the processes”*. *“Market Orientation is often mentioned in the process of determining the priority to be given when a company makes decisions. I will cite the development and execution of the business unit strategy as a key organizational driver of market direction.”* R #13

4.4 Market orientation consequences

Our panel suggested potential implications of market-oriented practices/culture and delineated that profitability is the main implication of the hotel market orientation, measured by financial and operational indicators. (Table 2)

Table 2: hotel performance measures

Indicators	Fréquency	Percentage
Turnover	14	100%
EDIBTVA	01	7%
Working Capital	10	70%
Gross Operating Profit	02	14%
Occupancy rate	13	90%
Market Share	10	70%
RevPar	09	65%
Frequentation rate	05	30%

The respondents exposed the main measures of hotel performance. The measures are crucial for top management to monitor hotel activity, with their frequency ranging from daily to yearly, depending on the defined objective. Additionally, complementary indicators are emerging to reflect shared goals across all hotel functions. The sales manager underscores the significance of market share, whereas the finance manager highlights the magnitude of accomplishments and the annual outcome.

Our panel suggested that turnover is important to measure hotel performance (100 percent of the total). Turnover directly reflects the hotel's ability to generate revenue by selling its available rooms. Higher turnover indicates greater demand for the hotel's accommodations and, potentially, higher revenue. Followed by the Occupancy rate (90 percent of the total) linked to the first, which is the percentage of available rooms that are occupied during a specific period. A high turnover rate usually corresponds to a high occupancy rate. Market share is also a critical indicator of a hotel's performance relative to its competitors within the sector and gives an overview of competitive positioning, reputation, and customer retention. Finally, Working capital is a fundamental financial metric that measures a hotel's ability to cover its short-term operational expenses and financial obligations. (70 percent of the total for both last measures).

Despite being reliable, these measures present some limitations. They remain static, and retrospective, and reflect solely on past decisions. As R #14 mentioned, *“These indicators are not sufficient to project into the future. When analyzing the indicator at time T, it may provide a retrospective interpretation (past analysis). However, in a tourism environment catering to diverse customer categories, external factors must be considered to decide on the continuity of the strategy or a change.”*

Moreover, another set of outcomes cited concurred upon improving customer satisfaction and loyalty, and requirements compliance. The majority of interviewees support the significant role of customer satisfaction, which has been strongly linked to good performance. It ranks among the primary expectations of managers. *“Customer satisfaction is the absolute priority,”* says R #12. This explains why managers assess their performance based on a satisfaction rate and an estimated return rate according to clients' intentions to revisit. Indeed, R #10 states: *“A hotel that regularly monitors the evolution of its customers' habits and requirements and can satisfy them to repeat the experience. A high-performing hotel achieves good results.”* Additionally, *“Customer loyalty is the key to success; it's the art of repeating the client's revenue”* according to R #4.

These results imply the implementation of a performance measurement system based on the hotel's objectives.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present study is a reflective inquiry, aimed at generating perspectives on the conceptualization and interconnections of Market Orientation in Moroccan hotels. Through qualitative research, insights have been provided into the representation and implementation of Market Orientation within this context. Market Orientation is recognized as a standard business practice, and our panel possesses a significant

amount of knowledge about it. It was uncovered that hotels engage in proactive behavior towards their market components, prioritizing the information-gathering function at a significant level. Certain specific sectors, such as the hotel industry, with their varied target markets and diverse offerings, must contend with a wide range of behaviors, attitudes, and customer needs. This finding is in line with what was noted by Benhalima [25] research in the same context suggests that *“The aim of the hotel requires orientation of the whole departments towards regular collection of information on the needs of customers, the capabilities of competitors and the behaviors of other agents and market authorities.”* Furthermore, the results prove that Moroccan hotels are market-driven. A lack of organizational market culture can hinder the ability to adapt to new environmental challenges. When there is a deficiency of emphasis on comprehending and reacting to market dynamics within the organizational culture, it can result in challenges when adjusting to new environmental demands. This finding highlights that Market Orientation before being a set of behaviors, is an organizational culture. This was demonstrated in the works of Narver & Slater [8] and Deshpandé et al.[26]. Similarly, Lambin et al. [23] justify this by presenting culture as one of the market orientation pillars with “analysis” and “action”. Rejecting the comments of Gotteland et al. [27] noting that the two definitions approaches (cultural and behavioral) compete with each other with a prevalence of each other, this question was decisively decided by Homburg and Pflesser [28] works on their integration. Mavondo [29] noted that “...definition of Market Orientation proposed by Narver and Slater [8] incorporates the two dominant paradigms that have been used to explain market orientation epistemologically.”

Regarding the second research question, the study highlights two principal Market Orientation components relevant to the Moroccan hospitality industry: customer and competitor. Customer preferences are inconstant and the market demand is highly uncertain, thus, both customer and competitor orientations are more desirable. This result does not align with those of Benhalima [25] as they reveal that Moroccan hoteliers perceive that the essence of the approach is only adopting competitive intelligence. This can be explained by the nature of services provided to customers, which are intangible and easily imitable by competitors.

Specifically, the customer dimension is categorized into two types: responsive which means referring to discovering, understanding, and satisfying expressed customer needs. In parallel, a proactive one refers to discovering, understanding, and satisfying latent customer needs. It comprises three main elements: intelligence dissemination, intelligence integration, and inter-functional coordination. Essentially, hotels can view these components as unified through formal methodologies. Customer-oriented strategy is born from information collected by different means of understanding its specific needs, including the purpose of satisfying customers.

On his part, competitor orientation leads to being able to keep a constant eye on strategies, strengths, and weaknesses of others to build knowledge and to exploit them in certain proactivity. Focusing on competitors and the drive to surpass them requires, according to the study, time for analysis to decide on the strategy adopted in response to either innovation or introduction of new products and services in the market before competitors or to improve the existing.

Taking up the third research question, the qualitative findings revealed four main factors strongly associated with market orientation implementation: Management commitment, human resources, strategy declination, and process organization. Our study confirms the role of leaders and any discrepancy between what managers say and what they do can harm other managers and thus on the organization’s market orientation as Kohli & Jaworski [9] have pointed out Top management reinforces the importance of market orientation is likely to encourage employees to track changing markets, share market intelligence, and be responsive to market needs. Some of these factors are identified in the literature of the European model of total quality (TQM) which are interdependent and can be associated with three strategic visions, market orientation, Strategic orientation, and resources orientation. [30]

Finally, our study identifies results from benefits of Market Orientation which are profitability, improving customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and compliance of requirements.

In the present context, Market orientation implications are examined from two angles: financial performance and customer performance, with a particular emphasis on delivering services that cater effectively to the needs of hotel guests. Hence, enhancing the relevance of measurement activities across all operational tiers and assessing the impact of operations on the environment becomes crucial.

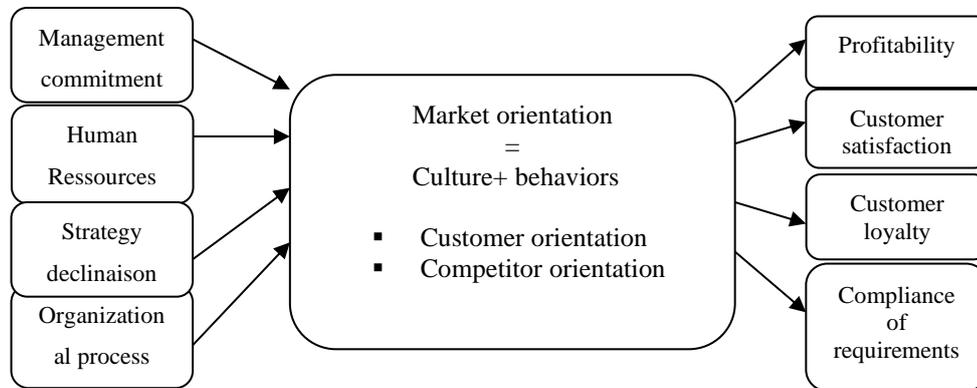


Figure 3: Antecedents and consequences of Market Orientation in the Moroccan hospitality industry

As mentioned in the preceding discussion, we tried to extend previous literature on Market Orientation in the Moroccan hospitality industry. The primary strength of this study, in addition of being the first processed in Morocco, lies in its utilization of interviews with leaders, managers, and experts from hotels affiliated with the classification system. Conducting interviews in French and subsequently translating them into English after transcription, classification, and coding added robustness to the study. However, some points for future research can treat the subject of this study in the post-pandemic era: how hotels can effectively implement customer and competitor-oriented strategies? Thus, the massive amount and complexity of the existing customer orientation literature in the context of services along with the ever-evolving business and market environments has led to an increasing need for a thorough literature review.

Acknowledgments

The researcher would like to thank Professor Rachid Jahidi for his support and motivation to complete this research.

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Appendix 1: semi-structured interview

What does the term “Market Orientation” mean to your hotel?

This should lead to a definition of hotel market orientation.

What are its components?

This should give a list of components along with explanations from respondents who are responsible for forming market orientation in hotels.

What are the factors that can foster this orientation?

This should give a list of factors along with detailed explanations from respondents that influence the degree of market orientation of the hotels' institutions.

What are the implications of adopting market orientation?

This is to see the possible effects of market orientation might have on the hotels.