

# Market Orientation Conceptualizations, Components and Performance-Impacts: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

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Received: March 20, 2019      Accepted: April 15, 2019      Online Published: May 21, 2019

doi:10.5539/ijms.v11n2p102      URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v11n2p102>

## Abstract

Market orientation is the business idea that sees the customer, consumer or client as the centre of business activities. It is one of the strategies that may lead to the achievement of efficiency and effectiveness in many organizations. It has relevance for all sectors in an economy. This paper undertakes a review of market orientation literature pertaining to conceptualizations, components and performance impacts. Based on the literature review, the paper develops a conceptual framework and suggests likely areas for future research efforts.

**Keywords:** market orientation, narrative literature review, meta-analysis, conceptual framework

## 1. Introduction

Organizations use different types of management strategies to cope with business challenges in their business environment in order to achieve organizational performance. Market orientation is one of the major strategies used by companies to monitor, analyze and respond to business challenges in the environment in order to achieve organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Hooley, Greenley, Cadogan, & Fahy, 2005). Generally, market orientation emphasizes customer satisfaction by coordinating functional marketing activities in order to achieve organizational efficiency and effectiveness (i.e., organizational performance). According to Lado et al. (1998), market orientation can be conceptualized as a competitive strategy that involves all functional areas and levels of an organization. Also, the role of market orientation as an organizational resource has been supported by various studies. Jabeen et al. (2013), for example, have argued that market orientation should be embraced by organizations for promoting lasting competitive advantage and greater firm performance, suggesting the need for further studies investigating the relationship between market orientation and performance in various forms of organizations.

Despite the positive outcomes of market orientation in developed countries, gaps have been observed in the study and implementation of market orientation in developing economies of Asia and Africa. In addition, it has been shown that the application of some Western management practices (such as market orientation) might not be successful in non-Western countries because of the mismatch between Western management practices and non-Western cultural values (Powpaka, 2006). Therefore, there are traces of equivocation regarding conceptualizations, components and performance-impacts of market orientation issues in extant literature. This paper presents a literature review of the conceptualizations, components and performance-impacts of market orientation issues in extant literature. In addition, the paper develops a conceptual framework to assist future research efforts.

## 2. Literature Review in Scholarly Research

Literature review presents the analytic and diagnostic views of scholars and writers with regard to areas of research interest. It is a critical review of relevant studies undertaken in specific areas of research interest, in addition to pulling different relevant strands of works together and locating any connections and contradictions among the works (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Generally, literature review is useful in scholarly studies because it helps in acquiring relevant and current knowledge in specific areas of research interest with respect to gaps in knowledge, strengths and weaknesses of research approaches used, development of hypotheses and conceptual

frameworks, construct clarification, research instrument development, and discussion of implications of research results, among others. When the research issue of interest has many studies, it is very difficult to undertake a comprehensive literature review in such a situation (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015). Literature review can be written in many ways (Wee & Bannister, 2016).

Narrative literature review has been the major task of many researchworks before the 1990s, and involved reading relevant research works on a research issue, summarizing results from such studies and arriving at reasonable conclusions and implications. Traces of subjectivity and lack of transparency, among others, are some of the limitations associated with narrative literature review, as opposed to systematic review and meta-analysis forms of literature review (Borenstein et al., 2011). In addition, systematic approach to literature review has the features of transparency, clarity, equality and accessibility, in addition to being unified and focused (Thorpe et al., 2006). Also, it helps to isolate known and unknown issues in specific area(s) of research interest (Bjornseth & Szabo, 2018). Consequently, some researchers have opted to use the systematic and meta-analysis forms of literature review instead of narrative literature review.

Systematic and meta-analysis methods of literature review have, however, been criticized to some extent. According to Matt and Cook (1994), threats to validity in narrative literature review are similar to those associated with systematic and meta-analysis methods of literature review. In addition, Franke (2001) argues that systematic and meta-analysis methods of literature review compare “apples and oranges” as these literature review methods do not focus completely on similar studies. Another argument against the use of systematic and meta-analysis methods of literature review is that both good and poor studies are included in the research samples, and the strengths from the good studies are likely to be contaminated by the weaknesses of the poor studies (Smith & Glass, 1977). Also, it is argued that systematic and meta-analysis methods of literature review are associated with population bias (Franke, 2001).

These apparent limitations of the systematic and meta-analysis methods of literature review may encourage the use of narrative literature review methods in marketing studies. In addition, many researchers in marketing and cognate disciplines adopt narrative forms of literature review, as opposed to the systematic and meta-analysis methods, in their studies because of, perhaps, their limited skills and knowledge of the systematic and meta-analysis literature review methods. Generally, narrative literature review examines cognate research issues that would gain from a total clarification and integration of relevant literature on a research issue of interest (Toracco, 2005; Meij et al., 2017). According to Higgins and Smith (2016), narrative literature review provides a broad topic area of research interest and helps to have a wide understanding of the construct(s) of research interest (Nasheeda et al., 2018). It should be noted, however, that narrative, systematic and meta-analysis forms of literature review have their strengths and weaknesses in marketing research. Therefore, researchers should combine (triangulate) these literature review methods so that the weaknesses of some methods can be compensated by the strengths of the other methods.

### **3. A Literature Review of Market Orientation Conceptualizations, Components and Performance-Impacts**

One major approach implicated in literature for achieving organizational performance in any business organization is through market orientation practices (Hooley et al., 2005; Day, Jaworski, & Kohli, 1993; Narver & Slater, 1990). Market orientation considers the customer/client as the centre of business activities and strategies (Deshpande & Webster, 1994; Kumar et al., 2011; Hooley et al., 2005) argue that market orientation is the only widely-accepted and empirically-derived scale for measuring the marketing strategies of companies in all sectors of developed and developing economies. According to Carpenter (2017), the concept of market orientation, in the past, was elusive and lacked conceptual definition and clarification. In addition, relevant literature has criticized market orientation for its static and current-looking perspective of market resources (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; Priem & Butler, 2001). However, over time, research on market orientation has increased appreciably thereby providing clarity, understanding and structure for conceptual and empirical studies (Deshpandé et al., 1989; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990, among others).

According to Tomaskova (2007), the major issues associated with the market orientation construct relate to definitions of the construct, dimensions of the construct, relationship between market orientation and performance measures, measurement methods for market orientation, and implementation of market orientation in companies. Therefore, this paper presents reviews of relevant literature relating to the following market orientation issues:

- 1) Conceptualizations of Market Orientation.
- 2) Components of Market Orientation.

3) Performance-Impacts of Market Orientation.

#### 4. Conceptualizations of Market Orientation

The marketing concept originated in the western developed countries following the industrial revolution. Over many decades, the marketing concept has passed through many orientations, including market orientation. The philosophy of the marketing concept posits that marketers should pay more attention to customers' needs and wants (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990, among others).

According to Kotler (1984), the marketing concept is a customer-oriented, integrated and profit oriented philosophy of business. It is a philosophy of business management based upon a company-wide acceptance of the need for customer orientation, profit orientation, and recognition of the important role of marketing in communicating the needs and wants of the market to all major corporate departments. Kotler (1998) argues that the key to achieving organizational goals depends on determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfaction more efficiently and effectively than competitors. According to Drucker (1954), the purpose of every business is to create satisfied customers and clients.

The practical implementation of the marketing concept is referred to as market orientation. For many years, the subject of market orientation has occupied the center stage of the theory and practice of marketing strategy. Market orientation has been seen as a major factor that has an effect on organizational performance (Hoburg et al., 2003; Narver & Slater, 1990), and as a valuable tool that influences firm innovativeness and performance by creating superior value to customers and clients (Narver & Slater, 1990; Kotler, 1994; Shapiro, 1988; Webster, 1981; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990, among others).

According to Sett (2017), relevant marketing literature sees market orientation as an operationalization of the marketing concept and as a source of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) that may lead to superior firm performance. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) were the first to explain the domain of market orientation, and structured the market orientation construct into three organization-wide dimensional processes: information (or intelligence) generation, information (or intelligence) dissemination, and application of market intelligence. Also, Narver and Slater (1990) perceived market orientation as an organizational culture with three behavioral dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination. According to Deshpande and Farley (1998), the two conceptualizations of market orientation by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) are related. Therefore, subsequent elaborations by scholars and researchers have not altered the essence of the original market orientation construct as proposed by Kohli and Jaworski and Narver and Slater (Sett, 2017).

The cultural (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990) and behavioural (Narver & Slater, 1990) perspectives of market orientation have been differentiated in literature (Sommer, 2018). While the cultural perspective defines market orientation as an organizational mindset and culture, the behavioural perspective deals with organizational instruments, tools, and behaviours. It should be noted, however, that the cultural and behavioural conceptualizations of market orientation share many basic ideas in common (Noble, Sinha, & Kumar, 2002) and are similar in the ways they have been operationalized (Cadogan & Diamantopoulos, 1995). Therefore, researchers have combined both the cultural and behavioural perspectives of market orientation in many studies (Baumgarth, 2009; Bridson & Evans, 2004; Homburg & Pflesser, 2000; Sommer, 2018).

Market orientation has been conceptualized by theorists and business decision-makers as the marketing concept in action (Gunnay, 2005).

Market orientation has also been conceptualized as a major part of capitalist economies (Matsuno et al., 2005), and as one of the management strategies leading to competitive advantage (Olson et al., 2005). Therefore, marketers in various industries and sectors (including service and manufacturing sectors) and cultures (including developed and developing countries) have been encouraged to adopt market orientation practices and strategies in their business decisions (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001). Although some research efforts have been made to clarify relevant issues pertaining to the theory and practice of market orientation in developed and developing economies (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narvar & Slater, 1990, among others), Harris and Ogbonna (2001) have argued that further research is needed in order to understand and clarify the market orientation construct in different contexts. According to Tomaskov (2007), market orientation can be defined as means which enable managers to emphasize external and internal issues influencing organizational activities and leading to performance improvements. Carpenter (2017) argues that market orientation, though an appealing concept, is less favoured and practised than other management approaches.

Chelariu et al. (2002) have advised, with regard to Sub-Saharan African countries, for the designing of market

orientation research instruments which will measure the unique characteristics, practices and strategies of companies in different sectors. In this regard, some research efforts have been made with respect to the market orientation strategies of some organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chelariu et al., 2002; Okoroafo, 2004; Osuagwu, 2006; Mbah et al., 2007, among others).

Bruhn and Hesselroth (2018) have observed that since the 1960s, it has been argued that customer and client needs should be main objective of every business organizations, concluding that one of the strategies to achieve this is via market orientation strategy. The market orientation emphases of firms can be industry-specific (Kasper, 2002). This means that some similarities may exist across all firms in an industry (Lado et al., 1998). However, cultural differences exist among firms in a sector and these cultural differences can lead to differences in their market orientation emphases (Kasper, 2002).

## 5. Components of Market Orientation

Market orientation has been conceptualized by scholars with regard to its components or dimensions. For example, Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli et al. (1993) have isolated three components in their different conceptualizations of the market orientation construct. Also, Deng and Dart (1994) have identified four components of market orientation, while Lado et al. (1998) present eight components and Sorensen (2005) argue for two components. In addition, Filatochev et al. (2016) have argued that the market orientation construct has three subcomponents, namely customer orientation (which deals with understanding customers' and clients' needs and wants), competitor orientation (which is concerned with understanding competitors' strengths and weaknesses and how they satisfy clients' and customers' needs and wants), and inter-functional coordination (which is concerned with the organization-wide use of resources in creating superior customer and client satisfaction).

Generally, the market orientation construct has been conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct (Edwards, 2001; Stoelhorst & vanRaaij, 2004; Sett, 2017). For instance, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) have presented three major process components of the market orientation construct: generation of market information; dissemination of market information; and application of market information. Also, Narver and Slater (1990) presented three behavioural components of the market orientation construct: customer orientation; competitor orientation; and inter-functional coordination. The components of market orientation presented by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) are all compatible or related (Sett, 2017). According to Jaworski and Kohli (1993), market orientation has three major dimensions or components: market intelligence generation; dissemination of market-oriented intelligence or information; and facilitation of market intelligence responsiveness mechanism or system in the organization. Mavondo and Farrell (2000) have advised researchers investigating market orientation to choose the Narver and Slater's (1990) Market orientation construct instead of the Kohli and Jaworski (1990) market orientation because the Narver and Slater's (1990) market orientation construct is likely to provide consistent results.

Generally, market orientation has been conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct that can affect organizational performance (Edwards, 2001; Stoelhorst & vanRaaij, 2004; Sett, 2017). However, Liao et al. (2011) have argued for the need for researchers to determine, via empirical research, new dimensions of the market orientation construct. Sett (2017) argues that market orientation comprises three major dimensions, including sensing opportunities and threats; seizing opportunities and/or guarding against threats; and reconfiguring firm resources to align with environmental variations or changes. Also, Kumar et al. (2011) posit that there is need for researchers to discover new components or dimensions of the market orientation construct.

Generally, market orientation consists of: (1) customer orientation, (2) competitor orientation, (3) Inter-functional coordination, (4) sensitivity to the environment, (5) market information system to develop a greater understanding of these market orientation components, and (6) and achievement of effectiveness measures (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kumar et al., 2011; Narvar & Slater, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1994, 1995; among others). It can, therefore, be stated that there is no conclusion in relevant literature regarding the components of the market orientation construct. According to Kumar et al. (2011), there is need for researchers to discover new components or dimensions of the market orientation construct. Some of the components or dimensions of market orientation from literature are discussed below.

## 6. Marketing Performance

The idea of marketing performance has been contentious in relevant literature due mainly to failure to reach consensus regarding its definition. Therefore, marketing literature is associated with many definitions of marketing performance. For instance, Kayabasi and Mtetwa (2016) define marketing performance as the ability

of a firm to achieve its short-term goals. In addition, Reimer, Rutz and Pauwels (2014) argue that marketing performance deals with the ability of a firm to achieve long term marketing goals.

The concept of marketing performance has been conceptualized mainly from the following two broad perspectives:

- i. Financial perspective in relation to marketing activities, which is a short-term perspective of marketing performance (Daukseviciute, Valainis, & Vilkaute, 2011; Kayabasi & Mtetwa, 2016; Reimer, Rutz, & Pauwels, 2014).
- ii. Assessment of marketing practices and strategies in relation to their ability to satisfy customers' and clients' needs and wants, which is a long-term perspective of marketing performance (Frosen, Tikkanen, Jaakkola, & Vassinen, 2013; Brooks & Simkin, 2012).

Although Greyser (1980) has documented the concerns of marketing decision-makers regarding how to measure the performance of firms' marketing decisions, there is the need for firms to assess the performance of their marketing decisions or practices. According to Kotler (1977), marketing performance is a multidimensional concept that may be measured through many indices. The indices are, generally, what a firm uses to determine whether its marketing practices and strategies have achieved the intended purposes (Forsen, Tikkanen, Jaakkola, & Vassinen, 2013). Also, the indices of marketing performance can be quantitative ((Kayabasi & Mtetwa, 2016) or qualitative (Srinivasan, Vanhuele, & Pauwels, 2010). Marketing performance can be assessed using many indicators such as market share, sales volume and profitability, among others (Kotler, 1977; Narver & Slater, 1990).

Therefore, it can be stated that there are components or dimensions of market orientation which an organization can practice in order to achieve its organizational goals (or performance measures). These market orientation components or dimensions, according to relevant literature, include customer satisfaction focus, coordination of inter-functional marketing activities, sensitivity to relevant marketing information, sensitivity to marketing environment and focus on marketing effectiveness, among others. Dimensions of performance measures include profit, market share, sales volume, cost reduction, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, among others.

## **7. Market Orientation and Performance Relationships**

Management decisions are the major determinants of business success or failure (Barret & Weinsten, 1998). Market orientation is an important management decision that can determine business performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993), and it has been noted that there is a positive relationship between market orientation and business performance (Narver & Slater, 1990).

Market orientation has been seen as a driver of business performance (Walsh & Lipinski, 2009). It is the organizational culture which puts emphases on organizational client and customer and is the strategic resource that can improve organizational performance. It is an index of the degree to which an organization implements its marketing strategy, thereby enabling the company's ability to anticipate, react to and leverage on environmental dynamics in order to achieve its stated performance measures (Veira, 2010). Roomi et al. (2009) argue that the reason for an organization to adopt the market orientation construct is because of the construct's ability to link positively with some measures of performance. Chakravarthy (1986) argues that if this purpose is not achieved, there is no major reason for adopting market orientation in an organization. According to Fitatotchev et al. (2016), market orientation does not automatically improve organizational performance without appropriate supporting or mediating processes, concluding that just assessing the direct impact of market orientation on business performance without determining the mediators between market orientation and performance is not fruitful.

Relevant market orientation literature has reported a positive relationship between the degree of a company's market orientation emphases and its performance measures (Kirca, Jayachandran, & Bearden, 2005). Specifically, Narver and Slater (1990) used only perceptual measures of performance to establish positive relationship between market orientation and measures of performance. However, Jaworski and Kohli (1993), using both perceptual and objective measures of performance, found no significant relationship between market orientation and market share, which is an objective measure of performance. Bhattarai, Kwonga and Tasavori (2019) submit that market orientation has been regarded in commercial business literature as an invaluable resource that can improve the performance of commercial business organizations, and conclude, using empirical evidence, that market orientation can improve both social performance and economic performance.

Deshpande and Farley (1998) have questioned why market orientation is not always strongly positively related

with performance measures, speculating that the relationship between market orientation and measures of performance could be context-specific (i.e., with regard to national differences, economic development differences, or industry-specific issues, among others). Therefore, there are more important areas that need further research regarding the relationship between the market orientation construct and measures of performance (Deshpande & Farley, 1998).

Relevant studies pertaining to the relationship between market orientation and performance measures may be grouped into two classes (Sett, 2017). The first group of studies, concerned with a direct link between market orientation and performance measures, are cross-sectional in nature, and used some moderating and mediating variables or none at all. The studies in this category, generally, suggest that the impacts of market orientation on performance measures are weaker on objective performance measures as compared to subjective (or perceptual) measures of performance. In related studies, Liao et al. (2011) found no clear empirical relationship between market orientation and objective measures of performance. Also, Cano et al. (2004) have found weak empirical relationships between market orientation and objective performance measures. In addition, Kirca et al. (2005) reported positive impact of market orientation on performance measures, although the study reported weak correlations between market orientation and objective measures of performance.

Sett (2017) posits that some relevant longitudinal studies have also reported weak relationships between the market orientation construct and objective measures of performance. For instance, the research by Noble et al. (2002) reported that only competitor orientation dimension of the Narver and Slater's (1990) operationalized market orientation construct showed any appreciable impact on objective measures of performance. Alsheq and Hossain (2019) argue, with empirical evidence, that market orientation has positive impact on the performance of small and medium enterprises.

Another group of studies on the relationships between market orientation and measures of performance matched market orientation with some intervening (mediating and/or moderating) variables. For instance, research by Hult and Ketchen (2001) reported that positive organization performance depends on market orientation, entrepreneurship orientation, innovativeness and organizational learning. Also, research by Hult et al. (2005) reported that the impact of market orientation on performance is mediated by organizational responsiveness, while research by Menguc and Auh (2006) found that the impact of market orientation on performance is more positive when market orientation is combined with innovativeness.

Therefore, conclusions from empirical studies dealing with the links between market orientation and marketing performance are equivocal. For instance, some studies have reported positive and significant relationships between the market orientation construct and business performance (Cano et al., 2004; Noble et al., 2002; Kumar et al., 2011; Kirca et al., 2005, among others). However, some studies have reported non-positive links between the market orientation construct and business performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; among others). According to Sett (2017), the impacts of market orientation on organizational performance have been investigated extensively, with empirical findings and evidence from corporate organizations not being conclusive. These equivocal empirical findings, therefore, seem to warrant the need for further research regarding the impacts of the market orientation construct on business performance (Shehu & Mahmood, 2014).

Narver and Slater (1990) assert that a business that increases its market orientation will improve its market performance. This view has been supported by both marketing academics and managers for many years (Kotler, 1998; Webster, 1994; among others). According to Narver and Slater (1990), market orientation is the organizational culture that creates efficiency and effectiveness. Prifti and Alimehmeti (2017) posit that relevant literature has noted the positive impact of market orientation on business performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kumar et al., 1998; Boekema et al., 2000; Kanagasabai, 2008, Neil et al., 2009; Frösén et al., 2016, among others), particularly when subjective or judgmental measures of performance are used (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993).

In summary, it can be stated that many studies have documented positive relationship between the market orientation construct and measures of business performance with or without mediating/moderating variables (Jaworski & Kohli, 1996; Kumar, 2002; Narver & Slater, 1990; Pelham & Wilson, 1994, among others). Specifically, Hart and Diamantopoulos (1993) reported a positive relationship between market orientation and business performance and recommended the adoption of market orientation in organizations as an important aspect of business strategy. Therefore, it can be stated that the impact of market orientation on performance measures has not been settled in the market orientation literature. For instance, Dobni and Luffman (2003) and Stoelhorst and van Raaij (2004) submit that the approach to explain the impact of market orientation on performance has not been developed satisfactorily and that existing market orientation literature does not have an integrating framework that will combine the different dimensions of the market orientation construct to explain

performance. In addition, Fitatotchev et al. (2016) argue that market orientation does not automatically improve organizational performance without appropriate supporting or mediating processes, concluding that just assessing the direct impact of market orientation on business performance without determining the mediators between market orientation and performance is not fruitful.

Also, although market orientation has been seen to create superior performance in western economies, the implementation still leaves some gaps in developing countries (Gunnay, 2005). In addition, studies on market orientation and its relationship to organizational performance in the service industry in a developing country context have been scarce. As mentioned previously, market orientation has been seen to be an important strategic tool in western economies. However, its understanding and application in developing economies have not been fully understood and explored. In addition, studies related to market orientation and its relationship to organizational performance in the service industry has been scarce. Against this backdrop, it is suggested that future studies be undertaken to determine the emphases, dimensions and performance-impacts of market orientation in different contexts, especially in different business sectors (service/manufacturing, profit/non-profit organizations) in countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

This paper has developed, from relevant literature, a conceptual framework linking market orientation dimensions and performance indices with or without any mediating/moderating constructs or variables. Therefore, based on the literature review regarding components of market orientation and relationships between market orientation and performance measures, the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 below has been generated for the understanding of some market orientation issues and assist future research efforts.

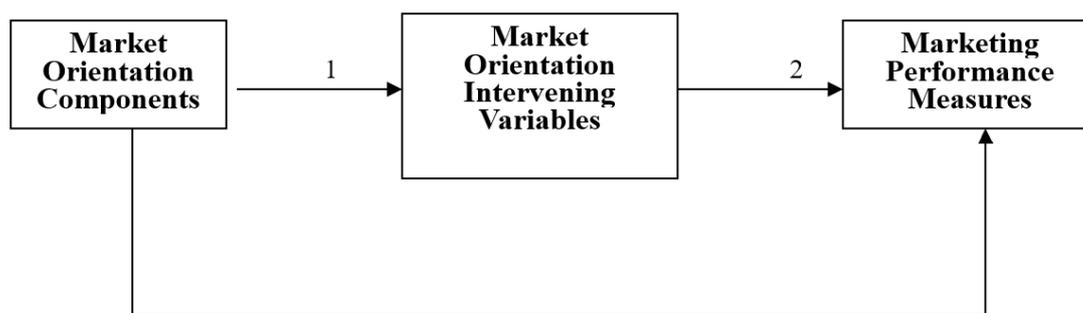


Figure 1. Market Orientation/Performance Relationships Framework developed from Literature (with or without intervening (mediating/moderating) variables)

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 shows the relationships among three major constructs: Market Orientation Components, Market Orientation Intervening Variables and Marketing Performance Measures. These three major constructs can be operationalized as follows: Market orientation components comprise customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional coordination, environmental orientation, and marketing information, among others. Market orientation intervening variables (mediating or moderating) comprise entrepreneurship orientation, innovativeness, organizational learning, and organizational responsiveness, among others. Marketing performance measures comprise profit, market share, sales volume, cost reduction, employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, among others. These three major constructs are interconnected in some instances (Osugwu, 2016).

## 8. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Research

Market orientation is an important strategy for organizational effectiveness and efficiency. However, the conceptualizations, components and performance-impacts of market orientation have not been settled in the literature. Consequently, the following areas are suggested for further studies in order to have a better and enhanced understanding of the market orientation construct and practice in organizations:

- i Objective measures of performance should be used in market orientation studies to overcome the issues associated with the use of perceptual measures of performance. Specifically, self-reported or perceptual measures of performance tend to be biased.

- ii Further research should be undertaken to determine how certain factors (such as innovativeness and entrepreneurship, among others) moderate or mediate the performance impacts of market orientation in companies. According to Fitatotchev et al. (2016), market orientation does not automatically improve organizational performance without appropriate supporting or mediating processes, concluding that just assessing the direct impact of market orientation on business performance without determining the mediators between market orientation and performance may not be fruitful.
- iii In addition, it is suggested that further research be undertaken to investigate the emphases, components and performance impacts of market orientation in different contexts (such as sectors, time periods, profit/non-profit organizations, among others). Such studies are likely to provide robust and clearer knowledge of the market orientation construct with regard to its conceptualizations, components and performance-impacts.
- iv It is suggested that the conceptual framework developed in this paper be tested in different contexts to determine its fit to real-world data and provide more insights to the market orientation construct (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001).
- v The literature review revealed the limitations (for instance, claims of causality) associated with the use of cross-sectional data in market orientation research. Therefore, longitudinal approach to investigating market orientation issues is suggested for future studies.
- vi Countries differ with regard to national and economic development issues. Therefore, further research is suggested to explore differences between specific developed and developing countries with regard to relevant market orientation issues of research interest.
- vii Finally, it is suggested that future studies be undertaken by using qualitative research approaches. This line of suggestion is supported by Schein (1996) who has argued that some organizational cultural practices, such as market orientation, cannot be accurately evaluated via survey instruments of quantitative research. Therefore, qualitative research approaches, such as individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, among others, should be considered as likely research approaches to be used in future market orientation studies.

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