

**DEVELOPING AN APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY TO
INVESTIGATE MARKET ORIENTED ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE.**

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ABSTRACT

Develops an appropriate research methodology which can be used to investigate Market Oriented Organisational Culture:

The Traditional Cultural Approach to Market Orientation is of the belief that culture drives behaviour(s) in organisations. However, the literature identifies an emerging Behaviours-Create-Culture approach which challenges this perspective (Gainer and Padanyi, 2005, p. 856). The relationships between Market Oriented Behaviours and the layers of an Organisation's Culture, however, remain unexplored from this emerging approach (Gainer and Padanyi, 2005).

Using the aid of Grix's (2002, p. 180) "building blocks of research" framework, the researcher develops an appropriate research methodology aimed at addressing this gap.

Consequently, this paper offers practical step by step guidance to researchers in demonstrating how to go about developing an appropriate research methodology, which can be used to investigate Market Oriented Organisational Culture.

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

Section A introduces an identified research gap within the field of Market Orientation. This paper then develops an appropriate research methodology aimed at addressing this gap.

1. Research Gap

Upon review of the literature in the area of Market Orientation, an existing research gap has been identified:

The literature highlights that a Market Oriented Organisational Culture may be viewed from one of, generally, two perspectives: A Cultural Perspective; or a Behavioural Perspective (Homburg and Pflesser, 2000; Gainer and Padanyi, 2005; González-Benito and González-Benito, 2005).

The vast majority of studies have adopted the traditional Cultural Perspective, which views Market Orientation as an organisational attitude and assumes that culture drives behaviour(s) in organisations (Sheppard, 2011) i.e. Market Oriented values have a positive influence on Market Oriented norms. These norms have a positive influence on Market Oriented artifacts, which, in turn, have a positive influence on Market Oriented behaviour(s) (Homburg and Pflesser, 2000).

However, in more recent years, growing concern for this rationale has been expressed in the literature (Gainer and Padanyi, 2005; Taras et al., 2009): Taking into consideration that “no agreement has been reached on the exact nature of market orientation” it is argued as irrational that the traditional Cultural Perspective is always taken (Gainer and Padanyi, 2005, p. 854). In fact, “It may be possible that [the] reverse . . . is also worthy of consideration” (Gainer and Padanyi, 2005, p. 854).

Resultantly, some researchers have begun to challenge the traditional Cultural Approach (Gainer and Padanyi, 2009; Taras *et al.*, 2009). Such researchers have shifted their focus towards the Behavioural Perspective which “describes market orientation in terms of specific behaviors” that are concerned with implementing the marketing concept (Homburg and Pflesser, 2000, p. 449).

Consequently, a new Behaviours-Create-Culture approach to Market Orientation has emerged (Gainer and Padanyi, 2005, p. 856).

Despite gaining merit from researchers such as González-Benito and González-Benito (2005) and Gainer and Padanyi (2005), all of whom have tested and consequently support this new approach, many gaps remain in the knowledge of it; in particular, questions remain about the relationships between Market Oriented Behaviours and the layers of an organisation’s Culture (Values, Norms and Artifacts). This research gap is summarised as follows:

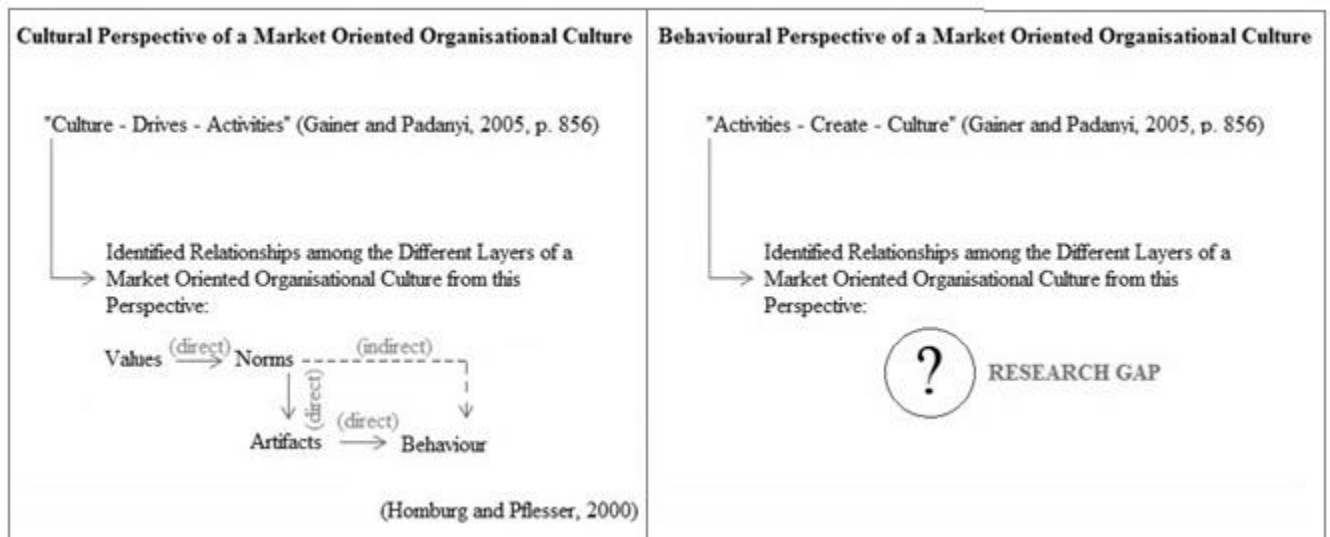


Figure 1: Identified Research Gap

Subsequent to identifying this gap, the researcher developed six hypotheses to be tested:

Table 1: Research Hypotheses
H1: The Market Oriented Behaviours of a Firm influence Cultural Artifacts
H2: The Market Oriented Behaviours of a Firm influence Cultural Norms
H3: The Market Oriented Artifacts of a Firm influence Cultural Norms
H4: The Market Oriented Behaviours of a Firm influence Cultural Values
H5: The Market Oriented Artifacts of a Firm influence Cultural Values
H6: The Market Oriented Norms of a Firm influence Cultural Values

Against this background, this paper develops an appropriate research methodology aimed at addressing the above (Table 1 and Figure 1).

SECTION B: DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Grix (2002) documents the following framework which will be used throughout Section B to aid the development of the researcher's methodology:

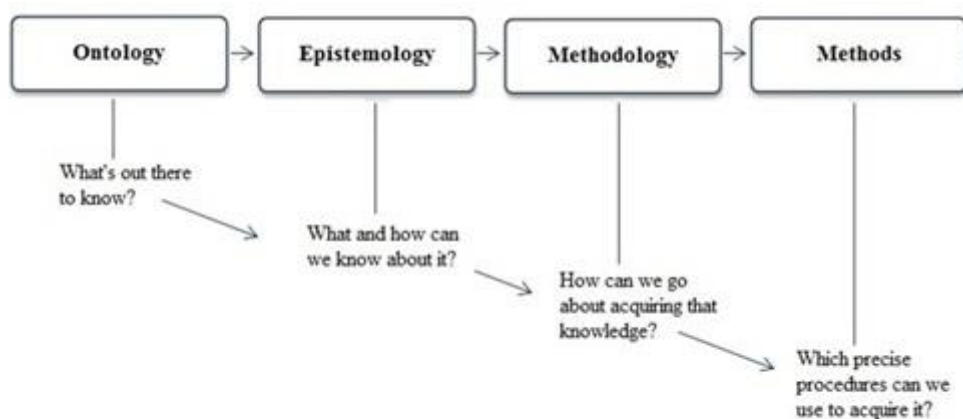


Figure 2: “The interrelationship between the building blocks of research” (Originally adapted from Hay, 2002, by Grix, 2002, p. 180 and further adapted by the researcher)

1. Ontology

As highlighted above, the starting point is to define one's ontological position (Figure 2).

Ontology is "the study of being" (Gray, 2009, p. 17). Specifically, it is:

Claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists . . . In short . . . [ontology is] concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality (Blaikie, 2000, cited in Grix, 2002, p. 177)

Two main alternative ontological positions exist: Objectivism; and Constructivism (Grix, 2002; Bryman, 2008). These lie at opposite ends of the spectrum and are summarised as follows:

Table 2: Objectivism Versus Constructivism		
	Objectivism	Constructivism
Nature of Reality	One reality; independent of the human mind	Formed within the human mind; constantly revised
Nature of Knowledge	Objective	Constructed

(Vrasidas, 2000; Grix, 2002)

Objectivists achieve objectivity by:

Requiring that theories . . . and explanations be empirically testable [, this] ensures that they will be intersubjectively certifiable since different (but reasonably competent) investigators with differing attitudes, opinions, and beliefs will be able to make observations and conduct experiments to ascertain their truth content (Hunt, 1993, cited in Holden and Lynch, 2004, p. 402)

The researcher's hypotheses (Table 1) reduced the research problem to smaller components and have attempted to make these components measurable. Therefore, they have aimed to allow the research results to be quantifiable and, thus, independent of the researcher's own thoughts and views. Conclusively, the researcher holds **a strong objectivist ontological position.**

2. Epistemology

Next, one must define one's epistemological position (Figure 2).

Epistemology originates from the Greek language: “*episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (reason)” (Grix, 2002, p. 177) and, so, is concerned with the reasoning behind knowledge (Bryman, 2008).

Two main alternative epistemological positions exist: Positivism; and Interpretivism (Grix, 2002; Bryman, 2008). Again, these lie at opposite ends of the spectrum and are summarised as follows:

Table 3: Positivism Versus Interpretivism		
	Positivism	Interpretivism
How can social sciences / reality be studied?	Scientific methods	Subjective methods which differ from the natural sciences
Corresponding ontological position?	Objectivism	Constructivism

(Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2009)

Since the 1960s there has been movement away from positivism to what is termed **post-positivism** (Bryman, 2008). A post-positivist approach challenges the complete certitude and objectivity of scientific findings claimed by the traditional positivist approach (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2009; Creswell, 2014). Post-positivists, therefore, acknowledge that knowledge “established in research is always imperfect and fallible” (Creswell, 2014, p. 7) and, hence, “all theory is revisable” (Social Research Methods, 2006).

A post-positivist position corresponds with the researcher’s ontological position (objectivism). Furthermore, this research is also compatible with the major elements of the “Post-Positivist Worldview” (Creswell, 2014, p. 6):

Table 4: Post-Positivist Worldview and its Applicability to this Piece of Research	
Element of Post-Positivist Worldview	Applicable to this research?
Determination (belief that a cause probably determines an outcome)	Yes: Behaviour can probably determine Culture
Reductionism (research problem reduced to smaller components)	Yes: Hypotheses (Table 1)
Empirical Observation and Measurement	Yes: scales will be developed to measure Behaviour and Culture
Theory Verification	Yes: Hypotheses will eventually be supported or rejected

Therefore, the researcher has adopted a **post-positivist epistemological position**.

3. Deductive Reasoning

As explained in Section A, the researcher deduced six hypotheses from the literature which will be tested and subsequently confirmed or rejected based on the research findings. Therefore, this research is utilising deductive reasoning which aims to test theory rather than develop it (Creswell, 2014):



Figure 3: “The process of deduction” (Bryman, 2008, p. 10)

Deductive reasoning is objective in nature and, hence, is in agreement with the researcher's ontological (objectivism) and epistemological (post-positivist) position.

4. Methodology

Once the philosophical aspects of research have been addressed (i.e. ontology and epistemology), the next step is to determine the most appropriate research methodology (Figure

2). There are three consecutive steps involved (Blaxter *et al.*, 2006, p. 61):

1. Research *Family* selection (Methodological Strategy);
2. Research *Approach* selection (Methodological Design); and
3. Research *Technique* selection (Methods)

Step 1: Methodological Strategy

Researchers are faced with a choice of three methodological strategies (Creswell, 2014):

1. A Qualitative Strategy;
2. A Quantitative Strategy; or
3. A Mixed Methods Strategy (combination of Qualitative and Quantitative)

Selection of the most appropriate methodological strategy should be inextricably linked to three factors: the research problem; the researcher's ontological position; and epistemological position (Smith, 1983).

With regard to this piece of research, the six hypotheses (Table 1) attempt to predict expected relationships between Market Oriented Behaviours and the layers of an organisation's Culture. They, therefore, fit the description of "quantitative hypotheses" (Creswell, 2014, p. 143).

A quantitative strategy follows the process of deduction (Figure 3) and is, therefore, associated with Objectivism (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore:

postpositivist assumptions . . . hold true more for quantitative research than qualitative research (Creswell, 2014, p. 7)

Conclusively, the research problem, the researcher’s ontological position and the researcher’s epistemological position are all in favour of **a quantitative strategy**.

The following table highlights some of the major differences between qualitative and quantitative research. It lends final support and further justification for the selection of a quantitative strategy for this research as opposed to a qualitative or a mixed methods strategy:

Table 5: Some of the Major Differences between a Qualitative and a Quantitative Strategy to research and their applicability to this piece of research				
	Qualitative Strategy	Applicable?	Quantitative Strategy	Applicable?
Ontological Position	Constructivist	No	Objectivist	Yes
Epistemological Position	Interpretivist	No	Positivist and Post-Positivist	Yes
Inductive/Deductive	Inductive	No	Deductive	Yes
Researcher/Participant Relationship	Close (emotional and/or physical)/Insider	No	Distant (emotional and/or physical)/Outsider	Yes
Level of control	Participants in driving seat	No	Researcher in driving seat	Yes
Research focus	Meanings/Words	No	Facts/Numbers	Yes
Level of structure	Un-structured/open-ended	No	Structured – examine precise concepts/issues	Yes
Nature of data	Rich, deep, based upon text	No	Hard, reliable, based upon numbers	Yes
Nature of findings	Theory emerging	No	Theory testing	Yes
Scope of findings	Contextual understanding	No	Large-scale generalisation	Yes

(Adapted by the researcher from Bryman, 2008, p. 393 and Gray, 2009, p. 200)

Step 2: Methodological Design

Selection of the most appropriate methodological design should be determined by one's: research problem; ontological position; epistemological position; and research strategy (Blaxter *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, using these four factors as a guide, the researcher considered the applicability of four of the most common methodological designs used in research: case study; experiment; action research; and cross-sectional survey. Subsequently, a **cross-sectional survey** was determined to possess the strongest applicability to this study and, so, was chosen as the most appropriate methodological design:

Table 6: Key Characteristics of a Cross-Sectional Survey and its Level of Applicability to this Piece of Research	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Same information collected about all of the cases in an identified sample; all participants asked the same questions ▪ Concerned with standardisation; defined questions which researcher wants answered ▪ Concerned with systematic collection of data ▪ Frequently generalises results ▪ Concerned with answering research questions that start with “what” ▪ Primarily quantitative; numerical data ▪ Associated with post-positivism → objective (Holden and Lynch, 2004) 	Strong Applicability

(Holden and Lynch, 2004; Blaxter *et al.*, 2006; Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2009; Creswell, 2014)

Step 3: Methods

Subsequent to defining one's research methodology, the next step is to select the precise tool(s) or method(s) which can be used to acquire the desire knowledge (Figure 2).

This selection should be based on the researcher's chosen methodology (Grix, 2002). Hence, methods are directly related to the research strategy and design and are, therefore, also influenced by the research problem, the researcher's ontological position and epistemological position.

Furthermore, a combination of practical considerations such as time, budget and/or desired data format will also influence the researcher’s choice of method(s) (Phellas *et al.*, 2011).

With regard to this piece of research, Bryman (2008) makes the researcher’s options explicit when he states that:

the term ‘survey’ [is] reserved for research that employs a cross-sectional research design . . . in which the data are collected by questionnaire or by structured interview (Bryman, 2008, p. 45)

Blaxter *et al.* (2006, p. 79) and Gray (2009) are also in agreement that these two methods are “at the heart of . . . survey research”.

While both of these methods possess many similarities, self-administered questionnaires exhibit a number of advantages over structured interviews which are appealing to this piece of research:

Table 7: Advantages of a Self-Administered Questionnaire over a Structured Interview
Broader choice of administration options → Interviews can generally only be conducted face-to-face and/or over the phone. Questionnaires can be administered through the post, by e-mail, online and/or in person i.e. handed directly to the participant.
Generally less time consuming → Appealing as time constraints apply.
Generally cheaper to conduct → Appealing as resources are limited.
Generally can administer to wider geographical area (linked to the three points above) → Therefore, can conduct questionnaires on a larger scale.
No Interviewer Bias (Interviewers can sometimes sway the participants’ answers) → Appealing as the researcher holds an objectivist ontological position and, therefore, wishes to avoid introducing subjectivity to the research.
Can be completed in participants’ own time and at their own pace → Appealing as it allows participants to think their answers through carefully.

(Bryman, 2008; Phellas *et al.*, 2011)

Furthermore, the two major advantages which structured interviews are considered to hold over self-administered questionnaires are less appealing to this piece of research. The first advantage

is the presence of an interviewer who can ultimately clarify any questions or concerns which the participants may have. However, a well thought out and designed questionnaire should eliminate this need. The second advantage of interviews is that they allow the researcher to probe deeper and elaborate on participants' answers. However, this is not advantageous to this piece of research as the researcher has adopted an objectivist ontological position and, so, aims to avoid introducing subjectivity to the study (Bryman, 2008; Phellas *et al.*, 2011).

Moreover, in considering the selection of a self-administered questionnaire method the researcher has considered the main disadvantages associated with this method and is confident that they can be overcome:

Table 8: Disadvantages of Self-Administered Questionnaires, and Suggested ways as to how to Overcome them.	
Disadvantage	How the researcher can overcome it
Tendency to receive low response rates	This issue has been addressed by many researchers in several academic books. Thus, the researcher can study this area in order to identify and utilise strategies which can help to overcome this disadvantage and, hence, improve the response rate of the study.
Cannot be sure who completes the questionnaire	The researcher can make it abundantly clear on the questionnaire who the desired participant is within each organisation (e.g. CEO). The researcher can also attempt to use a database which provides the name of the desired participant within each organisation, so that the questionnaires can be personalised and sent to the attention of this person.

Table 8: Continued . . .

Disadvantage	How the researcher can overcome it
Risk of missing data i.e. some questions left blank with no answer	The researcher can overcome each of these three disadvantages through a well thought out and well-designed questionnaire. Thus, the researcher can study the area of “best practice” in terms of designing questionnaires. Furthermore, the researcher can provide contact details so that participants may seek clarification in relation to any queries or concerns they may have.
Cannot clarify uncertainties	
May not be appropriate for all participants e.g. low literacy rates; or English represents a second or third language for the participant so, as a result, they may have trouble understanding the questionnaire.	

(Bryman, 2008; Phellas et al., 2011)

Consequently, taking all of the above into consideration the researcher has selected a **self-administered questionnaire** as the most appropriate method for this piece of research.

The literature identifies self-administered questionnaires as being the most prominent tool used in exploring Organisational Culture (Taras et al., 2009; Jung et al., 2009). The development of an appropriate research methodology using the aid of Grix’s (2002) framework (Figure 2) has ultimately led to the agreement and continuation of this approach by the researcher.

Table 9, which follows, documents many of the researchers identified in the literature who have adopted a quantitative approach, applied a survey methodology and, consequently, utilised a self-administered questionnaire method. Therefore, Table 9 further supports the above point by highlighting the popularity of and support for such an approach among researchers in the fields of Organisational Culture and Market Orientation:

Table 9: Researchers identified in the Literature who have adopted a Quantitative Approach, applied a Survey Methodology and, consequently, utilised a Self-Administered Questionnaire Method			
Researcher(s)	Year	Focus of Study	Nature of Study/Method(s) Used
Narver & Slater	1990	Market Orientation & Performance	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Jaworski & Kohli	1993	Market Orientation – Antecedents	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Deshpandé, Farley & Webster	1993	Organisational Culture – Market Orientation	Qualitative – Interviews Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Kohli, Jaworski & Kumar	1993	Market Orientation – MARKOR	Qualitative – Interviews (used to develop questionnaire) Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail) Primary focus: Quantitative
Maltz & Kohli	1996	Market Orientation – Intelligence Dissemination	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Pitt, Caruana & Berthon	1996	Market Orientation & Performance	Qualitative – Personal Interviews Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Avlonitis & Gounaris	1999	Market Orientation – Determinants	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Homburg & Pflesser	2000	Market Orientation – Relationship among layers	Qualitative – content analysis and field interviews (used to develop questionnaire) Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail) Primary focus: Quantitative
Harris	2001	Market Orientation & Performance	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
González-Benito & González-Benito	2005	Market Orientation – Cultural vs operational	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Farrell	2005	Market Orientation – Cultural effect on behaviour	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Gainer & Padanyi	2005	Market Orientation – Cultural vs operational	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Carr & Burnthorne-Lopez	2007	Market Orientation – Culture and conduct	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Cadogan, Souchon & Procter	2008	Market Orientation – Quality of behaviours	Quantitative – Questionnaire (mail)
Bonavia, Molina & Boada	2009	Market Orientation – Artifacts	Quantitative – Questionnaire (face-to-face)
Gjerald & Øgaard	2012	Market Orientation - Behaviours	Quantitative – Questionnaire (pen & paper, and electronic)

SECTION C: CONCLUSION

This paper identified an existing research gap in the area of Market Orientation and utilised Grix's (2002) framework (Figure 2) to aid the development of an appropriate research methodology aimed at addressing this gap (Figure 1 and Table 1). This development process can be summarised as follows:

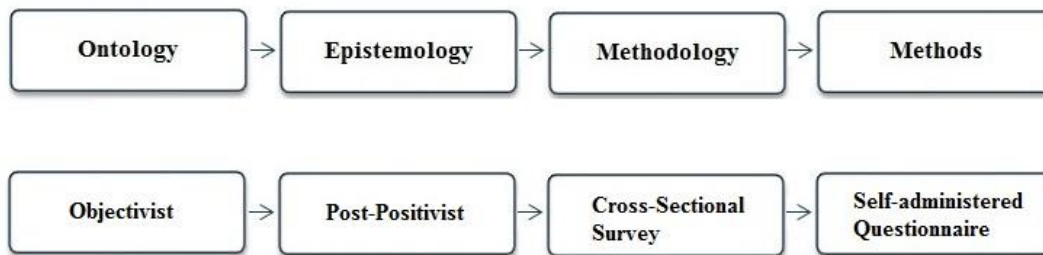


Figure 4: A summary of the development of an appropriate research methodology to investigate Market Oriented Organisational Culture.

Implications

From a theoretical point of view, this paper confirms an appropriate research methodology for investigating Market Oriented Organisational Culture.

From a more practical point of view, this paper offers step by step guidance to researchers in demonstrating how to go about developing an appropriate research methodology, which can be used to investigate Market Oriented Organisational Culture.

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