

Cultural domination: the key to market-oriented culture?

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Introduction

The 1980s witnessed an explosion of academic and professional interest in organizational culture (Deshpande and Webster, 1989; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Smircich, 1983). However, by the late 1980s earlier writings were criticised for their lack of theoretical rigour and practical utility which led to widespread apathy rather than an evaluation of the overall usefulness of culture as a tool for understanding organizations (Ogbonna, 1993). Fortunately, recent years have seen a more informed resurgence of interest in organizational culture which typically emphasises the crucial nature of the concept of culture (see for example, Frost *et al.*, 1991; Hofstede, 1991).

The increase of interest in organizational culture has coincided with a heightened awareness of the pivotal importance of an orientation towards the market. In particular, recent studies extensively examine the market orientation-performance linkage (Bruning and Lockshin, 1994; Diamantopoulos and Hart, 1993; Greenley, 1995; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Pitt *et al.*, 1996; Slater and Narver, 1994). Nevertheless, there remains a substantial body of scholarly literature with an undercurrent of distrust which rejects or misinterprets a basic philosophy of marketing (see for example, Dixon, 1992). Moreover, practitioners seem ignorant and confused about marketing theory and are often unable to implement basic market-led strategies (Harris, 1996; Harris and Piercy, 1996; Piercy, 1992).

Deshpande and Webster (1989) argue that, despite some considerable linkages, there have been few conceptual studies combining organizational culture and marketing. However, marketing theorists have produced a series of empirical papers reviewing the performance implications of culture, on for example, planning (Leppard and McDonald, 1991), market orientation (Narver and Slater, 1990; Slater and Narver, 1994) and on marketing effectiveness (Dunn *et al.*, 1985; 1994; Norburn *et al.*, 1988; 1990).

In contrast this paper seeks to develop and extend culture and marketing research, with the following objectives:

- To develop a conceptualisation of a market-oriented culture which is synthesised from a critical evaluation of marketing and culture theory and thus is consistent with extant models of organizational culture.
- To explore the interface of organizational and marketing culture and the factors which effect interaction with the aim of developing a greater understanding of how an organizational culture can develop market orientation.

Given such goals the audience of this paper is marketing academics and executives as well as those researchers who are interested in the interface between organizational behaviour and marketing.

The key to a
market-oriented
culture?

So, what is organizational culture?

Cultural theorists propose and develop multiple perspectives of organizational culture, the diversity derived from discrepancies in the assumptions which researchers make about both “organization” and “culture” (Martin, 1992; Smircich, 1983). Smircich (1983, pp. 343; 347) examines the intersection of organizational culture and organizational theory and contends that researchers in the area can be divided along two dimensions; those which view culture as a “root metaphor” and those which emphasise culture as a “variable” of analysis. Briefly, researchers who view culture as a variable either present culture as an *independent* variable which is imported into the organization or as an *internal* variable which is created and maintained by the organization. Culture viewed as a root metaphor, presents organizational culture as either generated by cognitions, constituted of symbols or as an expression of unconscious processes (respectively being cognitive, symbolic and psychodynamic perspectives of organizational culture).

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The framework developed by Smircich (1983) is applied to research in marketing in the seminal paper of Deshpande and Webster (1989). Utilising the fivefold classification of Smircich (1983), for each perspective, Deshpande and Webster (1989) develop implications for marketing research and methodology.

This paper is a response to the suggestions of Deshpande and Webster's (1989, p. 13) that marketing researchers first, “delve into the rapidly developing literature on organizational culture” and second, “develop theoretical structures” to gain greater understanding of marketing phenomena. Overall, Deshpande and Webster (1989) echo the conclusion of Smircich (1983) that researchers use different themes and perspectives for, contrasting reasons, the theme being dependent on the particular needs of the researchers. Consequently, for the purposes of this paper, organizational culture is defined as a dynamic set of assumptions, values and artefacts whose shared meaning can be acquired by members of the organization. This definition is synthesised from the definitions of Schein (1985) which focuses on the components of culture, DiBella (1993) which concentrates on shared meaning, and Hatch (1993) which emphasises the processual dynamics between components of organizational culture. Hence, the presented definition illustrates three major ramifications of contemporary organizational culture theory – that culture is composed of distinguishable components (assumptions, values and artefacts), that components are dynamic (that is linked by two-way processes) and that culture is not a unitary concept. These implications are discussed in turn below.

The components of culture

Schein (1985) presents a view of culture on three levels which has been described as “one of the only conceptual models ever offered” (Hatch, 1993, p. 658). Schein’s (1985) model of culture emphasises distinguishable categories of organizational culture which have commonly become known as the three components of organizational culture (Ott, 1989). Schein’s (1985) conceptualisation of culture is shown in Figure 1.

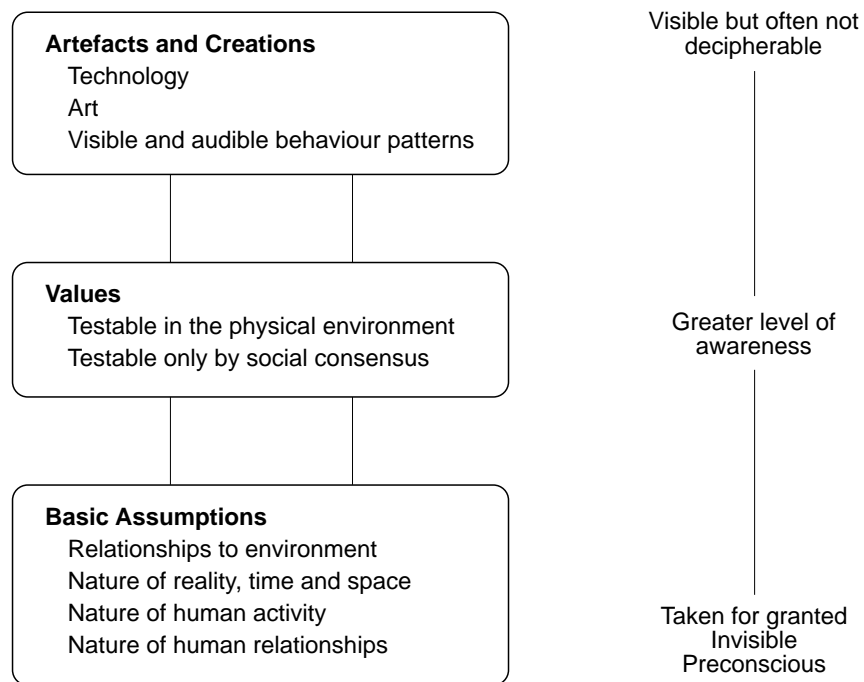


Figure 1.
Levels of culture and
their interaction

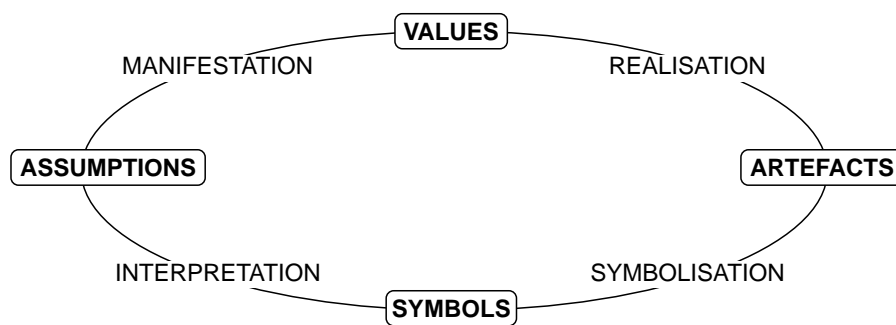
Source: (Adapted from) Schein, E.H. (1985, p.14)

On the surface of culture are artefacts, underneath artefacts lurk values and at the nucleus are basic assumptions. Cultural artefacts can be viewed as the most physical creations of culture, examples include an organization’s structure, strategies and systems as well as employee behaviour and language. The values of culture can be viewed as similar to beliefs with an “ought to” implication (Sathe, 1983). Examples of organizational values include orientations towards teams, outcomes and details. Assumptions are the most cerebral level of culture, those taken-for-granted premisses which determine the more explicit system of meanings. Common organizational assumptions pivot around the organization’s relationship to the environment: for example, that the

organization is influenced by the environment and the organization has the ability to react to such pressures. Assumptions are more commonly known to marketers as managerial representations (Day and Nedungadi, 1994), that is, how executives make sense of the environment and events, or frames of reference (Sharma, 1994) which employees use to make sense of their environment.

The processes of culture

Hatch (1993) argues that Schein's (1985) model of culture over-emphasises the components of culture to the detriment of processes which link the components of organizational culture. Indeed, what is implicit to a distinguishable component conceptualisation of organizational culture (i.e. that culture is constituted of artefacts, values and assumptions) is the assumption that such components are linked by processes, (that is, the components of culture interact with each other). Hatch (1993) presents the "Cultural Dynamics Model" of organizational culture which explicitly focuses on these dynamic relations (see Figure 2).



Source: (Adapted from) Hatch, M.J. (1993, p.660)

Figure 2.
A dynamic model of culture

Adopting a symbolic interactionist perspective Hatch (1993) extends and develops Schein's (1985) model through focusing on both the two-way processes and four components of culture. However, notwithstanding the contribution of Hatch's (1993) emphasis on the processes of culture, many "mainstream" theorists consider symbols to be an element of cultural artefacts (for example; Ott, 1989). Such theorists contend that since assumptions, values and artefacts of culture may have symbolic meaning, such symbols do not constitute a component of culture in their own right.

Cultural pluralism

Young (1989) notes that the model of Schein (1985) is also weakened by the implicit underlying presumption of cultural unity. Schein's (1985) assumption of

a single organizational culture is inconsistent with much of organizational culture research. Indeed, Pettigrew (1979, p. 574) argues that "culture treated as a unitary concept ... lacks analytical bite". Thus, many theorists have developed pluralist perspectives of culture along with a variety of labels for the sub-divisions of culture, for example Ouchi's (1981) "clans", Gregory's (1983) "native views", Morgan's (1986) "mosaics" and Sackman's (1992) more conventional, "subcultures". An issue which is consistent with the majority of these views is that the boundary of a culture is determined by the extent of shared meaning. Indeed, many organizational theorists would argue that without a shared meaning, a culture (be it unitary or pluralist) cannot be defined or distinguished (that is, it is the shared meanings of organizational members which defines culture).

Therefore, organizational culture can be viewed as a mosaic of subcultural shared meaning (often with similar traits) which are bounded by the frontiers of the organization. Thus, strong cultures (Robbins, 1983) with unified beliefs and artefacts can be viewed as a series of subcultures integrated by a dominant set of beliefs (Martin, 1992).

In summary, this paper has synthesised a conceptualisation of organizational culture from the works of Schein (1985), Hatch (1993) and a variety of pluralist culture theorists. The theory of Schein (1985) contributed a three component view of culture, Hatch (1993) added an emphasis on dynamic processes between cultural components, whilst the writings of cultural pluralists furnished a view of culture, constituted of numerous subcultures often unified by dominant subcultural shared meaning. The three components and processes on an organizational culture subculture can be modelled as shown in Figure 3.

So, what is a market-oriented culture?

The preceding paragraphs have presented a contemporary view of organization culture. However, given the recommendation of Deshpande and Webster (1989) that marketing scholars utilise the concept of organizational culture, a major question for marketing theorists must be "so, what is a market-oriented culture?". In recent years marketing academics have become increasingly interested in defining and conceptualising market orientation (Harris, 1996; Harris and Piercy, 1996). The result of this scholarly attention has been the emergence of two perspectives; the information-processing perspective championed by Professors Kohli and Jaworski and, the cultural perspective championed by Professors Narver and Slater (Meehan, 1996; cf. Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995). It is the cultural perspective on market orientation which is most pertinent in the context of this paper (a discussion of the information-processing perspective of Jaworski and Kohli, (1993) has been conducted elsewhere – see Harris (1996)).

The cultural perspective has provided numerous attempts at the definition of a marketing culture or a market-oriented culture, the principal three being those of Webster (1993), Narver and Slater (1990) and Deshpande *et al.*, (1993). In a

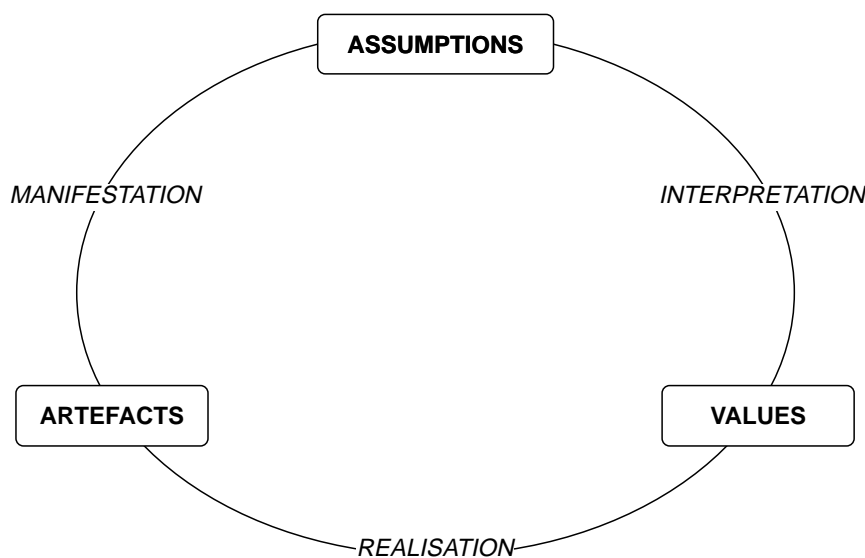


Figure 3.
A conceptualisation of
organizational culture

series of papers Webster (1990; 1991; 1992; 1993) develops, purifies and refines a 34-item scale designed to measure marketing culture in the service context. Utilising a highly rigorous methodology, Webster (1990; 1991; 1992; 1993) argues that an organization's marketing culture can be audited via dimensions of service quality, interpersonal relationships, selling task orientation, organization, internal communication and degree of innovativeness (a market-oriented culture being the marketing culture most closely focused on market). Thus, Webster (1993, p. 113) defines marketing culture as:

the unwritten, formally decreed and what actually takes place in a marketing context; it is the pattern of shared values and beliefs that helps individuals understand the marketing function and thus provides them with norms for behaviour in the firm ... in other words, the marketing culture of a service firm refers in the way marketing "things are done in the firm".

Similarly, Narver and Slater (1990) and Slater and Narver (1994) develop and empirically test a construct of a market-oriented culture based on the dimensions of customer and competition orientation and interfunctional-coordination. Presenting market orientation as a form of organizational-wide culture, Narver and Slater (1990, p. 21) define market orientation as:

The organizational culture (culture and climate cf. Deshpande and Webster, 1989) that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviour to the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business.

Finally, Deshpande *et al.* (1993) present a view of market orientation which centres on the set of beliefs which place the interest of customers first. Overall, there appears to be a general consensus that the key distinction between a marketing culture and a market-oriented culture is that a market-oriented

culture is organizational wide or dominant whereas a marketing culture need not necessarily be market oriented.

It is clear that the above definitions have merit; however, marketers' views of a market-oriented culture are not wholly consistent with contemporary cultural theorists' views on "organizational culture". Hence, it may be argued that much of marketing theory is utilising conceptualisations of culture, derived from organizational culture theory, which contemporary organizational culture theory now rejects. For example, Webster's (1993, p. 113) definition of "the way marketing things are done in the firm" is derived from the much criticised book of Deal and Kennedy (1982), while Deshpande *et al.* (1993) concentrate on one cultural component (values). Moreover, the definitions of culture within marketing theory implicitly assume (and prescribe) a unitary culture despite culture theory to the contrary (see earlier). Overall, with the exception of the inclusion of shared values, many definitions and conceptualisations of culture, used by marketing theorists are not consistent with the literature and theory base from which they were originally derived.

Consequently, in order to develop a view of a market-oriented culture which is consistent with contemporary organizational culture theory, this paper forwards a definition of a market-oriented culture which includes references to the key issues of; the components of culture, the dynamism of culture and shared meaning within subcultures. Hence, this paper defines a market-oriented culture as *the dominant, dynamic segment of an organization whose orientation, attitudes and actions are geared towards the market* (a definition synthesised from the culture theorists Hatch (1993), Schein (1985) and the marketing theorists Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Narver and Slater (1990); and Webster (1993)). The inclusion of a number of key phrases within this definition require further explanation. First, the definition includes reference to the components of culture (orientation, attitudes and actions). Second, "dynamic" infers processes linking components. Third, "segment" implies cultural pluralism. Finally, since a market-oriented culture is supposed to be organization-wide, "dominant" implies that the market-oriented subculture must dominate alternative subcultures (see Whittington and Whipp, 1992). These facets of the above definition are discussed more fully below.

The stratification of marketing culture components

Examinations of the content of marketing focus around two principal themes; the discussion of the marketing concept and the analysis of its operationalisation. Recent years have seen a plethora of literature reviewing the content and components of the marketing concept. There have been calls for the broadening of the concept (Kotler and Levy, 1969), the narrowing of the concept (Sachs and Benson, 1978) and the operationalisation of the concept (Barksdale and Darden, 1971). This coincides with claims that the marketing concept is the cause of the rise of consumerism (Bell and Emory, 1971), of the decrease in competitiveness (Kaldor, 1971), and of an increase in long-term perspectives (Reisz, 1980). The results of such discussions are unclear. However, what

emerges is that the philosophical roots of marketing are grounded in basic assumptions about the organization's marketing and its environment and the values of members of the marketing organization. The literature examining the physical operationalisation of the marketing concept into market orientation, is also comprehensive (for instance, Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Narver and Slater, 1990; Ruekert, 1992). The main verdict of such literature is that market orientation consists of a number of physical creations (for example, the information systems of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Jaworski and Kohli (1993)) coupled with shared organizational values (for instance, the customer/competitor focuses of Narver and Slater, (1990) and Slater and Narver (1994)).

Overall, research into the context of marketing does refer to levels or components of marketing, specifically; a philosophy of marketing (akin to cultural assumptions and values) and an orientation towards the market (akin to cultural artefacts). Hence this paper's previous assertion that a definition of marketing culture must include reference to layers and components.

The processual nature of marketing

The processual nature of marketing culture is also implicit throughout the marketing concept/orientation literature in that many marketing studies mention the processes that occur between the components of a marketing culture. For example, early examinations analyse the impacts of marketing values on the artefacts of a marketing culture (an example being Tauber's (1974) study of how existing values towards marketing influence the structure and systems of innovation – what Hatch (1993) would view as a study of how cultural values become realised into artefacts). More recent studies have viewed, amongst other things, the impact of systems on values (for instance, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Jaworski and Kohli (1993) examined the impact of information systems on employee attitudes). Therefore, while marketing theorists do implicitly refer to the dynamic, processual nature of marketing, to date, no marketing theorist has explicitly researched cultural dynamics.

Marketing as one of a series of subcultures

If we accept the view of organizational culture as constituted of numerous subcultures often (but not always) unified or controlled by a dominant subculture, then a market-oriented culture should be conceptualised as a subculture which dominates over conflicting subcultures. Such a view is not wholly inconsistent with research conducted in the field of marketing. For example, Whittington and Whipp (1992, p. 52) discuss difficulty in marketing implementation, and forward "the mobilization of professional ideologies" (a kind of subculture) as the solution. Similarly, Piercy (1989) contends that the key to market-led strategic change is the manipulation of structure, process and information through political manoeuvring (once again implying that conflicting views exist and thus that culture is fragmented) the solution being marketing dominance. Consequently, the earlier presentation of a market-

oriented culture as one which controls or dominates other subcultures, is consistent with both organizational culture and marketing theory. The components of organizational and market-oriented culture are summarised, compared and contrasted in Table I.

In summary, this paper's definition of marketing culture is based on a significant body of previous research. Based on explicit and implicit references within marketing and culture theory, the basis for a conceptualisation of market-oriented culture has emerged which is consistent with contemporary views on organizational culture.

	Market-oriented culture	Organizational culture
Scope	Dominant subculture	Mosaic of subcultures
Basic assumptions	A marketing frame of reference	One or more bureaucratic, "professional", political or entrepreneurial frames of reference
Values	A positive emphasis on innovation, team integration, competitive outcomes, channelled aggression, a focus on people matters and a preoccupation for detail	A combination of values towards innovation, stability, people, outcomes, details, teams and aggression
Artefacts	The sum of marketing's verbal behavioural and physical creations	The sum of the organization's verbal behavioural and physical creations

Table I.
The components of
marketing and
organizational cultures

When viewed from a modern organizational culture perspective, possibly the most critical issue to emerge from the discussion so far is one which dominates other organizational subcultures. Hence, the development of a market-oriented culture is dependent on two issues:

- (1) delineating cultural assumptions, artefacts and values which are market oriented; and
- (2) analysing the factors which affect the ability of the market-oriented culture to control other subcultures.

The discussion of these issues and the development of tentative propositions will constitute the remainder of this paper.

Delineating the components of a market-oriented culture

Marketing culture assumptions

There exist two main perspectives on the depth and content of organizational level cultural assumptions. Theorists such as Schein (1985) and Hatch (1993) take a "purist" view of assumptions as the taken-for-granted, invisible, preconscious, non-debatable layer of culture. In contrast, there exists an

emerging “revisionist” view that what really matters are the mental models which employees use to make sense of their environments (Day and Nedungadi, 1994). However, this paper takes a pragmatic line which is mid-way between the two extremes. Shrivastava and Mitroff (1983) epitomise such a view, in that they theorise, in keeping with Schein’s (1985) purism, that individual, group and organizational dynamics result in organizational-level assumptions of the micro- and macro-environment. However, Shrivastava and Mitroff (1983), in keeping with the “revisionist” view, categorise basic assumptions into organizational-level frames of reference (FOR) which underlie strategic decision making in organizations, their prototypical frames of reference being those of bureaucracy, professionalism, politics and entrepreneurialism. In essence, Shrivastava and Mitroff (1983, p.163) view each type of FOR as constituted of “ontological, epistemological, methodological, scientific, and common-sense assumptions” of individuals or groups of individuals.

The application of such proposals to a market-oriented culture finds that existing marketing theory conceptualises the “philosophical” base of marketing through the vague tenets of the marketing concept of profitability, customer focus and organizational integration (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). However, this concept is not wholly appropriate, in that each of these vague values of the marketing concept are founded on deeper basic assumptions of human activity, nature and relationships to the broader environment (Schein, 1985). The three pillars of the marketing concept (profitability, customer focus and integration) are clearly founded on a bed-rock of deeper more fundamental assumptions. Indeed, much strategic marketing literature eludes to a number of issues which we assumed to be true. Thus assumptions of a market-oriented culture are postulated to include:

- that the organization is dependent on the environment for existence;
- that the environment impacts on the organization;
- that the organization has the ability to analyse, prospect and react to environmental influences;
- that it is possible to satisfy customer needs, wants and demands and this will lead to long-run profitability and thus organizational survival; and
- organizational dissonance will reduce efficiency and effectiveness.

Marketing culture values

At an organizational level, values can be defined, as attitudes concerning the world with an “ought to” implication (Sathe, 1983). O’Reilly *et al.* (1991) identify seven value dimensions of organizational culture, those towards innovation, stability, people, outcomes, details, teams and aggression.

The application of such value dimensions specifically to a market-oriented culture allows this paper to synthesise existing literature and to postulate that such a culture will include a positive team/organization orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993), a highly competitive output orientation (Slater and Narver,

1994), an emphasis on market orientation (Deshpande and Webster, 1989), a high internal and external orientation (Bruning and Lockshin, 1994), an employee oriented value system (Webster, 1994) and an aggressive marketing belief (Keith, 1960).

Marketing culture artefacts

The artefacts of an organization are those more tangible creations of a culture, being either verbal, behavioural or physical (Denison, 1990). Artefacts are therefore a substantial element of the organization's make up, including the systems, strategies and structure of an organization, behavioural patterns and norms as well as the more subtle influence of organizational language.

The artefacts of a marketing culture are well covered in the marketing literature, with previous studies tending to concentrate on specific types of artefacts (for example, Kohli and Jaworski, 1990 concentrate on information artefacts). However, this paper postulates that the creations of a marketing culture are more than just, for example information systems (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) but are the sum of the physical, behavioural and verbal artefacts which are geared towards the market. The examination of the above list of market-oriented artefacts finds distinct parallels with the capabilities and competencies discussed by Day (1994). In particular, the list of artefacts developed in this paper are very much attune to the external emphasising superior outside-in processes detailed by Day (1994).

The presentation of an exhaustive list of market-oriented artefacts is arguably impossible (since at least some of the artefacts would be context specific). However, it is possible to synthesise existing theory to postulate that a market-oriented culture would include; low levels of conflict and politics, highly developed information generation, and dissemination systems, HRM systems geared towards the market, integration and co-ordination systems, complex control systems, a marketing function with a wide scope of responsibility, low levels of formalisation and centralisation, high levels of connectedness, a high level of marketing input into strategic planning and, a developed response implementation and design ability. (This list is derived and synthesised from the collective works of Day, 1994; Greenley, 1995; Gummesson, 1991; Harris and Piercy, 1996; Hooley *et al.*, 1990; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Liu, 1995; Piercy, 1992; Ruekert, 1992; Slater and Narver, 1994; Webster, 1993; 1994; Wong *et al.*, 1989). Utilising the terminology of Day (1994), the artefacts of a market-oriented culture are the sum of those physical outside-in process capabilities and competencies which inform and market orient spanning and inside-out processes.

Factors affecting culture dominance

Thus far, this paper has presented and justified a definition, conceptualisation and an analysis of the components of a market-oriented culture. It has also been argued that the developed model is consistent with both organizational culture

and marketing theory in that the forwarded view of culture is dynamic and pluralistic. Moreover, a theme of this paper has been that the development of an organization-wide market-oriented culture is dependent on the development of cultural dominance by the subculture of market orientation. Indeed, by its very definition (see Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) a market-oriented culture is one which is organization-wide. Given the forwarded conceptualisation of culture it is possible to theorise the factors which can affect the ability of one subculture to dominate one of several other subcultures.

Consequently, this paper contends that the ability of a market-oriented culture to “govern” wider organizational cultures is dependent on a number of factors. Specifically; the ability to identify subcultures, the relative strengths of subcultures, the receptability of culture, cultural adaptability and cultural transferability.

Identifying subcultures

The constant academic and practitioner reference to “culture” has created a common assumption that “cultures” are easily identifiable. Indeed, “culture” has become such an over-used concept that it is possible to argue that its “true” meaning is now clouded (Ogbonna, 1993). Writers and managers frequently assume that each department, function and geographical location will have an identifiable variation of the organization’s culture. Unfortunately, culture is not that simple. Variations in culture may be slight, subcultures frequently cross-functional and the identification and articulation of deeper-level assumptions and values difficult even for members of the subculture. Thus, a major restriction on the ability of a market-oriented subculture to dominate the wider organization, is the difficulty in recognising groups of individuals who have a common culture and identifying the precise cultural elements within the subculture which are at-odds with market orientation. Hence:

P1: The greater the ability of a market-oriented subculture to identify non-market-oriented subcultures and subcultural components, the greater the probability of market-oriented change.

The relative strengths of cultures

As has been noted previously, a major barrier to the development of an organization-wide marketing culture is “the sheer difficulty in attempting to change traditional thinking and practices or the self interest of staff within their units” (Wong *et al.*, 1989, p. 45). In culture terms, what Wong *et al.* (1989) are describing is the difficulty of overcoming entrenched values – what culture theorists would phrase cultural “strength”. Briefly, cultural “strength” refers to the level of consistency and cohesiveness of shared meaning among subculture members. Quite simply, the stronger the relative culture, the more robust it is to change or manipulation and the greater the probability of dominance over other subcultures. Organizational culture scholars have expended considerable efforts to discuss culture strength, each theorist using different terms to denote

“strength” (for example, Schall’s (1983) “congruence”, Sathe’s (1983) “thickness” and Weick’s (1985) “coherence”). Nevertheless, there is value in such differences since discrepancies can be attributed to the theorists’ explicit or unintentional concentration on specific cultural components. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, Sathe’s (1983) “thickness” refers to the relative strength of values, Louis’s (1985) “psychological penetration” to cultural assumptions and Schall’s (1983) “congruence” to culture artefacts.

Therefore, it is possible to propose that, according to culture theory, the greater the relative strength of a market-oriented culture, the greater the probability that the culture can dominate weaker subcultures. Conversely, the relatively weaker the assumptions, values and artefacts of the marketing subculture, the greater the opportunity for other subcultures to control and dominate the marketing culture. Therefore:

P2: The greater the relative psychological penetration of market-oriented assumptions the greater the probability of organizational-wide cultural dominance.

P3: The greater the relative thickness of market-oriented values the greater the probability of organizational-wide cultural dominance.

P4: The greater the relative congruence of market-oriented artefacts the greater the probability of organizational-wide cultural dominance.

The receptability of culture

As part of the “is culture manageable?” debate, Martin (1985) contributed a paper which asserted that organizational culture is not manageable but can be manipulated, under certain conditions (that is, since culture is dependent on shared meaning it is not a variable which can be managed, but merely a phenomenon which must be indirectly influenced and hence manipulated). Martin (1985) contends that cultural manipulation is a complex and risky undertaking with most attempts resulting in unintended consequences. Moreover, Martin (1985) argues that the manipulation of culture is only possible during certain conditions, during which time the organization is susceptible to cultural control and suggestion (the most pertinent occasions being crisis, leadership turnover and organizational formation).

This theory has given rise to that which this paper labels “receptability”, or what could easily be called the generation of legitimate or moral authority. Thus, during certain conditions the components of wider organizational culture are susceptible and receptive to change via subcultures. (This view being somewhat akin to the arguments of Whittington and Whipp, 1992.) Through the application of Martin’s (1985) theory to the relationship between a market-oriented culture and the wider organizational culture it is possible to develop a proposition pertaining to culture receptability:

P5: The more favourable the conditions for cultural manipulation, the greater the probability of market-oriented change/manipulation.

It is beyond the scope (and power) of this paper to identify the wide variety of contingencies wherein conditions can be considered favourable for cultural manipulation. However, it would appear that Martin's (1985) suggestions of organizational formation, crisis and leadership turnover can be classified as "favourable".

Cultural adaptability

The fourth factor which this paper proposes can influence the ability of a market-oriented culture to achieve cultural dominance, is that of culture component adaptability. Cultural adaptability refers to the degree to which the components of culture are susceptible to adjustment. While the components of organizational culture may be identifiable, weak and receptive to change, if they cannot change, they will not. This may sound obvious, but it is a factor easily overlooked. The degree of adaptability of components is related to their cultural depth (artefacts being the most tangible component and assumption, the most cerebral component, see earlier: Schein, 1985). Given the correct conditions the majority of artefacts can be adapted, changed or manipulated to become more (or even less) market oriented. However, there are numerous examples of cultural values and assumptions which cannot easily be adapted or changed. For example, how is it possible to change quickly an assumption of a subculture – something we assume to be true without conscious thinking?

The concept of adaptability is not to be confused with that of cultural strength. Whilst strength refers to the degree and depth of conscious or unconscious belief or entrenchment, adaptability refers to the ability of culture be changed or manipulated. Given this argument it is possible to propose:

P6: The weaker the deeper levels of organizational culture, the greater the potential for market-oriented change/manipulation.

P7: The greater the overall adaptability of a non-market oriented culture, the greater the potential for market-oriented change/manipulation.

Cultural transferability

The final issue which influences the ability of a market-oriented culture to dominate other subcultures is that of cultural transferability. Cultural transferability refers to the capability of conveying the essence of a cultural component across subcultural boundaries so that the shared meaning of the conveyed component remains constant. That is, the shared meaning of a cultural component of one subculture is transferred to another subculture. The transferability of culture is highly related to the earlier topic of cultural adaptability. If we accept the views of many culture theorists such as Schein (1985) that the deeper levels of culture are less susceptible to change, then it is logical to extend this to the "transfer" of culture. Indeed, as noted by many authors, a key characteristic of the assumptions and values of a market-oriented

culture is their difficulty in gaining organization-wide acceptance (for example, Wong *et al.*, 1989). Hence, this paper proposes:

P8: The greater the similarity between the deeper levels of organizational-wide culture and market-oriented culture, the greater the probability of market-oriented change/manipulation.

Implications

The propositions developed with this paper have direct theoretical and managerial implications. First, relative to existing conceptualisations, the developed model of a market-oriented culture presents a more contemporary, realistic and complete view of culture. Second, the developed propositions relate to the potential factors which influence the ability of a market-oriented subculture to achieve cultural dominance and control.

This paper has two main themes of implications. The application of culture constructs and theory to marketing indicated that our views of such concepts as the marketing concept and market orientation have been too narrowly focused. Thus, whilst marketers had espoused the philosophy of marketing, they have tended to overlook the assumption on which this “philosophy” is based. While this may appear to be the splitting of fine semantic differences, no mathematician would use a statistical formula without understanding the assumptions on which it is based – so why should marketers? Furthermore, this paper argues that while theorists have tended to use umbrella terms such as “customer closeness” to describe and prescribe desired marketing values, a literature derived synthesis of market-oriented values, indicates a wide range of interlinked beliefs and values. This again implies, how can market-oriented cultures be developed if we are unable to articulate the necessary values? The application of the concept of cultural artefacts to market orientation also over-concentrated on physical creations (for example, information systems), arguably the under-emphasis on verbal and behaviour artefacts weakens our theory and understanding of market orientation.

In terms of processual dynamics, building on the work of Hatch (1993), the model of culture presented provides a means to shift academic emphasis away from the analysis of static content to the practical, dynamic, processual nature of organizational existence. Thus, this paper forwards an argument centred on the need to understand and manage the components and the processes of both organizational and marketing culture. The effective manipulation of culture (be it market oriented or not) is surely impossible without these considerations. The emphasis on cultural fragmentation also leads to implications for marketing theorists. As discussed earlier wider marketing theory implies organizational fragmentation (for example, Piercy, 1989). However, marketing writers on culture tend to assume cultural unity. To achieve the full benefit of the legacy of culture theory marketing must follow the recommendations of Deshpande and Webster (1989, p. 13) and “delve into” contemporary theory – outdated or simplistic views are no longer acceptable.

Overall, in relation to market-oriented culture, this paper provides the basis for a modern, dynamic, stratified and complex view of culture, which can form a small incremental step towards a greater undertaking of marketing and culture.

This paper also has implications regarding the forwarded proportions relating to culture dominance. A significant focus of marketing theory has been the analysis of barriers to the development and maintenance of market orientation (see Wong *et al.*, 1989). However, utilising the culture conceptualisation and perspective forwarded in this paper, it is arguable that marketing theory has been ill-focused. Through the use of marketing constructs considerable advances have been made (for example, Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). However, since theory now indicates that market orientation is a culture, the use of previously non-marketing constructs (i.e. culture), appears necessary. Thus, examining how and why subcultures interact should provide a means of greater understanding of market orientation development.

Conclusions

In summary, this paper attempts to clarify the confused domain of marketing culture while providing a working definition of culture and a foundation for developing the construct. The existing literature on marketing and organizational culture was found to be incomplete in its conceptualisation of culture, in that such models frequently imply unity and are often static and over-simplified. A synthesis of the views of Schein (1985), Hatch (1993) and Young (1989) proved to be exceptions to this rule through their respective emphasis on stratification, dynamism and pluralism. Consequently, the application of Schein's (1985), Hatch's (1993) and Young's (1989) theories led to the forwarding of a synthesised model of culture. Applying the developed framework to a market-oriented culture, found that existing marketing literature was unhelpful in its analysis of the content of marketing – the majority of studies tending to use variations of the marketing concept and market orientation as “holistic” conceptualisations of marketing. Moreover, present conceptualisations of marketing were found to be relatively simplistic and often ignored the processual nature of marketing.

Consequently, building on the work of other authors (most notably Hatch, 1993), a conceptualisation of a market-oriented culture was developed which emphasises the stratification, processual dynamics of pluralist subcultures. The development of a model of market-oriented culture which is consistent with existing conceptualisations of organization culture enabled the conceptual analysis of the interaction between the two subcultures. Briefly, a number of factors were forwarded as affecting the ability of a market-oriented culture to control the wider organizational culture. These included identifying non-market-oriented cultures and cultural components, the relative strengths of culture, cultural receptability, adaptability and transferability.

The developed framework has major implications for both marketing executives and marketing academics (particularly those interested in the

marketing-organizational behaviour interface). However, a number of key issues need to be addressed in future research. First, it is clear that marketing theory's understanding of the construct of culture is limited. This paper represents a very small step towards greater appreciation, but further work is necessary to develop more realistic models of marketing cultures. Moreover, despite the undoubted importance of marketing theory's emphasis on the analysis of activity, further research is required on the more reflexive elements of marketing management (i.e. how activity is interpreted post-action). The processual nature of marketing culture also needs further research – while many marketing academics discuss cultural processes implicitly, very few specifically concentrate on the dynamic nature of marketing culture.

However, the key question for further research pivots around the “testing” of the developed conceptualisation of marketing culture, and subculture interaction. Taking the proposed conceptualisation of marketing culture it is clear that three possible research designs are possible; a qualitative design which could “best” assess subjective cultural components and processes; a quantitative design which could “best” study the more objective elements and processes of culture, or; a quantitative and qualitative design which studies culture from both an objective and subjective perspective. Given the under-researched nature of marketing as a culture, it is clear that at least the first phase of research should be qualitative in order to define the domain of enquiry more clearly. These problems are compounded due to the research traditions of marketing and organizational culture theorists have often taken a more subjective and qualitative approach. Preliminary indications are that a longitudinal qualitative and quantitative design is best suited to the peculiarities of culture research and is “acceptable” to both research traditions.

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