



**SWP 24/87 STRATEGIC MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO CORPORATE CULTURE AND
BELIEFS: A CROSS-NATIONAL STUDY**

SUE BIRLEY

Philip and Pauline Harris Professor of Entrepreneurship

DAVID NORBURN

Professor in Strategic Management

**Cranfield School of Management
Cranfield Institute of Technology
Cranfield
Bedford MK43 0AL
United Kingdom**

(Tel: 0234-751122)

(Fax: 0234 751806)

and

MARK DUNN

Assistant Professor of Marketing

**Hankamer School of Business
Baylor University
Waco. Texas 76798
USA**

(Tel: 817 755 3525)



Int. Studies of Mgt. & Org., Vol. XVIII, No. 2, pp. 83-100
M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1988

DAVID NORBURN (UNITED KINGDOM),
SUE BIRLEY (UNITED KINGDOM),
AND MARK DUNN (USA)

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Development of research in strategic management has followed a course along a path that has changed from an inanimate to an animate focus. Early emphasis concentrated on what constituted appropriate strategy formulation in terms of content; but, as knowledge advanced, typologies were developed and related to measures of both financial and organizational performance (see Galbraith and Nathanson [1] for a comprehensive review). Progressing via those mechanisms that affect strategy—appropriate organizational structures (see Hofer and Schendel [2])—more recent research has grappled with the implementation of the

David Norburn is Director and Professor, The Management School, Imperial College of Science and Technology, 53 Prince's Gate, Exhibition Rd., London SW7 2PG, England. Sue Birley is Harris Professor of Entrepreneurship, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield, England. Mark Dunn is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Hankamer School of Business, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA.

strategic process itself [3,4]; and the unit of analysis has thus shifted to animate subjects, managers.

The corporate culture that welds these managers into an effective cadre—the “organizational glue” [5]—has therefore become the subject of much debate. Lack of congruence in managerial perceptions is considered dysfunctional [6,7], particularly under conditions of strategic realignment [8–10]. Positive promulgation of the corporate culture is thought to encourage all employees to embrace the goals of the enterprise [11–14]. Further, the use of culture as a form of control is argued by Wilkins and Ouchi [15], and as a means of increasing productivity, by Ray [16]. Corporate culture, defined succinctly by Deal and Kennedy [12] as “the way we do things around here,” is advanced as the best managerial practice (see Peters and Waterman [13]): it is essentially an interpretive paradigm in understanding the behavior of organizations [17,18].

In parallel with this research direction from strategic management, scholars of marketing have developed a predominant emphasis on a consumer orientation, a philosophy that has become the very foundation of their theoretical advance. As knowledge has been gained, their focus of attention has also shifted from inanimate factors to encompass the human aspects of successful implementation, a direction supported by Kotler’s [19] observation that “. . . of the *Fortune* 500 Corporations, it seems to me that only a handful really understood and practiced sophisticated marketing.”

From both schools of scholarship, therefore, inherent boundaries in human behavior have been identified as the constraints in implementing what may be optimal in a strategic sense, which suggests a relationship between the beliefs and values of managers and strategic effectiveness in the marketplace. In support of this view, Buzzell, Gale, and Sultan [20], drawing on their PIMS database, have warned that the characteristics and beliefs of top management are a major explanatory factor in determining financial variability.

To investigate this phenomenon, an experiment was conducted

within 177 companies in the American Midwest, the results of which supported the hypothesis that companies that demonstrated a superior strategic marketing effectiveness were also those that had the cultural characteristics of being close to customers, displayed an identifiable set of corporate values, and had an external focus.¹ Given the establishment of this theoretical base and the encouraging direction of the investigation, the study was extended on an international basis to an additional three countries—the United Kingdom [21], Australia, and New Zealand—to effect both intra- and international analysis.

Caveats

Commentators on the research designs of studies in international management advance three caveats pertinent to such research. The first is the danger of ethnocentrism [22,23], an implicit assumption being evident that the Western, usually American, model is inherently superior. The second caveat refers to differences in interpretation of the English language (see, for example, Haire, Ghiselli, and Porter [24], who point out that the Japanese attribute a completely different meaning to the word *democracy*). The third caveat concerns the incomparability of samples of convenience—possibly emanating from the frequency of appearance of visiting professors of international business!

In the study reported here, our multinational design, covering three continents, should mitigate against the first danger, and our use of English as the primary language, against the second. As for the third, comparability should be facilitated by our attention to corporate size and the mix of standard industrial classification (SIC) codes in our sample design.

THE STUDY

Purpose of the study

The present study is grounded in investigation of potential bar-

riers to implementation by considering the human component and its relationship to operationalizing the strategic marketing concept, defined as the level of corporate marketing effectiveness. The analysis concentrates primarily on the views presented by Peters and Waterman [13] of the common characteristics of America's "excellent" companies. Notwithstanding the criticisms from the academic world concerning the study's methodological rigor, its acceptance by the corporate world has been exceptional: its results have been used by many corporations as the basis for prescriptive plans for implementation of the strategic process—as a way of changing "the way we do things around here" [12].

Three cultural characteristics identified by Peters and Waterman are relevant to marketing strategists and thus to this study:

(1) the importance of "consumer closeness"—a service orientation, an innovative spirit, an obsession with quality, and a view of the organization from the perspective of the customer;

(2) the need for a distinct and identifiable set of corporate values represented by a belief in "being the best" and in the importance of people;

(3) an external, or market-oriented, focus, as distinct from an internal, or company-oriented, focus. This broad philosophy emphasizes the importance of the marketplace as a key determinant of corporate action.

Building upon these key issues, the major hypothesis of this study is that, irrespective of national origin, companies that can be characterized as close to their customers, that show an identifiable set of corporate values, and that have an external focus will also be those that demonstrate superior strategic marketing effectiveness.

Methodology

Data collection

A self-administered questionnaire was designed; and a pilot study

was conducted, in the summer of 1984, of 54 firms in the geographic triangle of Northern Indiana, Southern Michigan, and Eastern Illinois. Three basic issues were addressed: strategic marketing effectiveness, customer closeness (as defined by Peters and Waterman [13]), and corporate values. The results of this study have been reported by Dunn, Norburn, and Birley [25].

A revised questionnaire, incorporating questions regarding market orientation, was then mailed to senior executives of 650 randomly selected manufacturing firms in the same geographic area and to 500 firms in the United Kingdom. Usable replies were received from 177 U.S. firms and 104 U.K. firms, giving response rates of 27 percent and 21 percent, respectively. The survey has recently been completed in Australia and New Zealand. This paper reports the analysis of the comparative results from the British and American experiments.

Scales and measurements

The level of strategic marketing effectiveness was measured using 15 3-point scales developed by Kotler [19]. These are listed in Table 1. The items were designed to audit strategic marketing effectiveness in five essential areas: customer philosophy, integrated marketing organization, marketing information, strategic orientation, and operational efficiency. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a five-point scale, the extent to which they thought each condition existed within their organization.

Eight statements were constructed to measure consumer closeness and seven, to highlight organizational or corporate values. These statements, shown in Table 2, were drawn from the results of Peters and Waterman [13]. In each case respondents were asked to indicate, on a five-point and seven-point scale, respectively, the extent to which each of these values existed within their organization. To determine the market orientation of the firm, six statements were developed (see Table 2), three each for external and internal orientation; and respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the extent to which the state-

Table 1

Strategic Marketing Effectiveness

Customer Philosophy

- ME1. Does management recognize the importance of designing or providing products or services that serve the needs and wants of chosen markets?
- ME2. Does management take into account suppliers, competitors, customers, and its operating environment in planning its organization?
- ME3. Does management develop different strategies for different segments of the market?

Marketing Organization

- ME4. Are there marketing integration and control of major marketing functions (i.e., advertising, product development, marketing research, and personal selling)?
- ME5. Do employees responsible for marketing activities work well with employees in other functional areas?
- ME6. How well organized is the process for assessing new product or service opportunities?

Marketing Information

- ME7. When was the last systematic study of the marketplace conducted?
- ME8. How well does management know the sales potential and profitability of different market segments?
- ME9. What effort is expended to measure the cost-effectiveness of different marketing expenditures?

Strategic Orientation

- ME10. What is the extent of formal marketing planning?
- ME11. What is the quality of the current organization strategy?
- ME12. What is the extent of contingency planning?

Operational Efficiency

- ME13. How well is marketing thinking communicated and implemented down the line?
 - ME14. Is management doing an effective job with the marketing resource?
 - ME15. Does management react quickly and efficiently to on-the-spot marketing changes?
-

ments were representative of their organization.

Analysis and discussion

To test their propriety, the four scales of strategic marketing effectiveness, customer closeness, corporate values, and market orientation were each subjected to principal-component analysis using an orthogonal rotation. Factors that had an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 were extracted for further analysis. Aggregate scores were then computed for each of the factors by summing the item responses, and a reliability coefficient was calculated for each subscale. Both market-orientation factors identified from the U.S. analysis and factor 2 from the U.K. analysis (see Table 6 below) failed to satisfy the reliability criterion, and so were omitted from further analysis; all other subscales yielded an acceptable reliability estimate.

To decide whether the two groups shared the same latent structure, the analysis was checked against the criteria established by Tabachnik and Fidell [26]:

1. When the same criteria were used, did both groups generate the same number of factors? If not, is there an obvious difference in overall structure?
2. Do almost the same variables load highly on the different factors for the two groups?
3. Could you reasonably use the same labels to name factors for both groups?

Further, Tabachnik and Fidell note that "If all three questions are answered in the affirmative, it may be unnecessary to proceed to statistical comparisons." However, where statistical analysis was possible, Cattell's Salient Similarity Index was calculated. The comparative data are presented in Tables 2 to 6.

Strategic marketing effectiveness

In both cases, three factors were identified that explained 50.5

Table 2

Customer Closeness, Corporate Values, and Market Orientation

Customer Closeness (CC)

- CC1 - My company thinks of itself as providing a service rather than selling a product.
- CC2 - Employees of my company view the business through the eyes of their customers.
- CC3 - My company feels the key to attracting and holding customers is to keep improving product quality.
- CC4 - Employees of my company would take a quality complaint as a personal insult.
- CC5 - My company constantly seeks to improve its total offering, defined in terms of more value for its customers.
- CC6 - An important objective of my company is to provide a reliable, high value-added service.
- CC7 - My company encourages feedback from its customers.
- CC8 - My company feels that innovation and change come directly from the customer.

Corporate Values (CV)

- CV1 - A belief in being the "best."
- CV2 - A belief in the importance of the details of the execution, the "nuts and bolts" of doing the job well.
- CV3 - A belief in the importance of people as individuals.
- CV4 - A belief in superior quality and service.
- CV5 - A belief that most members of the organization should be innovators.
- CV6 - A belief in the importance of informality in enhancing communication.
- CV7 - Explicit belief in and recognition of the importance of economic growth and profits.

Market Orientation (MO)

- MO1 - Customers will probably buy again; and even if they don't, there are many more customers.
 - MO2 - The organization concentrates its attention on the task of producing good products that are fairly priced.
 - MO3 - The main task of the organization is to satisfy the needs and wants of its customers.
 - MO4 - Customers will not normally buy enough on their own.
 - MO5 - The organization constantly searches for better products, defined in terms of appeal and benefit to customers.
 - MO6 - The main task of the organization is to get sufficient sales from its customers.
-

Table 3

Factor Structure of Strategic Marketing Effectiveness Items

	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3	
	U.S. MEAS	U.K. MEAK	U.S. MEBS	U.K. MEBK	U.S. MECS	U.K. MECK
ME1	—	—	0.66093	0.64407	—	—
ME2	—	—	0.69973	0.64817	—	—
ME3	—	—	0.57882	0.77475	—	—
ME4	—	0.54291	—	—	0.65237	—
ME5	—	0.70990	—	—	0.81531	—
ME6	0.61672	0.59445	—	—	—	—
ME7	—	—	0.62708	—	—	0.81790
ME8	0.61315	—	—	0.73099	—	—
ME9	0.56810	—	—	—	—	0.70907
ME10	—	—	0.66865	0.59353	—	—
ME11	—	—	—	—	—	—
ME12	0.65702	—	—	—	—	—
ME13	0.61315	0.65609	—	—	—	—
ME14	0.67441	0.76324	—	—	—	—
ME15	—	0.58815	—	—	—	—
Reliability estimates: Cronbach						
	0.7755	0.7815	0.7290	0.7952	0.5653	0.5888

Key: MEAS—marketing efficiency; MEAK—organization and efficiency; MEBS—customer philosophy; MEBK—customer philosophy; MECS—marketing organization; MECK—market information.

percent of the total variance for the United States and 57.8 percent for the United Kingdom (see Table 3). Although three items that focus primarily on operational efficiency are common in factor 1, there is some evidence for this to be combined with marketing information in the United States but with marketing organization in the United Kingdom. Thus, we have termed factor 1 *marketing efficiency* for the United States and *organization and efficiency* for the United Kingdom.

Factor 2 demonstrates a strong commonality between the two countries, and we have termed this factor *customer philosophy* since three of the four common factors fall within Kotler's [19]

Table 4

Factor Structure of Customer Closeness Items

	Factor 1		Factor 2
	U.S. CCAS	U.K. CCAK	U.S. CCBS
CC1	—	0.60453	0.81352
CC2	—	0.69386	0.60709
CC3	0.74041	0.61876	—
CC4	—	0.53382	—
CC5	0.65067	0.72334	—
CC6	—	0.70995	—
CC7	0.66062	0.71502	—
CC8	0.59808	—	—
Reliability estimates: Cronbach			
	0.6033	0.7720	0.5753

Key: CCAS—customer awareness; CCAK—customer closeness; CCBS—customer service.

definition of the term. Cattell's Salient Similarity Index is 0.8 and significant at 0.1 percent.

The third factors are completely different—for the United States, this factor highlights the need for *marketing organization*, whereas for the United Kingdom, the items demonstrate a need for *market information*.

Customer closeness

Although all the items except number 8 scored in both these analyses, inspection of the data suggests strong differences in emphasis between the two countries (see Table 4). No cases fell into the hyperplane, so it was not possible to calculate the significance of Cattell's Index. Thus, factor 1 for the United States, which accounts for the largest percentage of the variance, encompasses statements that reflect the need for *customer awareness*, the need to be constantly aware of feedback from customers; the second factor is concerned with *customer service*. The only factor

Table 5

Factor Structure of Corporate Value Items

	Factor 1		Factor 2	
	U.S. CVAS	U.K. CVAK	U.S. CVBS	U.K. CVBK
CV1	0.82765	0.86111	—	—
CV2	0.79392	0.78975	—	—
CV3	0.58279	0.51294	—	—
CV4	0.77836	0.76612	—	—
CV5	—	—	0.76353	0.71992
CV6	—	—	0.84697	0.90361
CV7	—	—	—	—
Reliability estimates: Cronbach	0.7869	0.8182	0.6102	0.7257

Key: CVAS—people and quality; CVAK—people and quality; CVBS—informality and innovation; CVBK—informality and innovation.

emerging from the United Kingdom encompasses all but one of Peters and Waterman's *customer closeness* items. Factors 1 and 2 accounted for 45.7 percent for the United States and factor 2, for 43.6 percent for the United Kingdom.

Corporate values

Two factors emerged for each of these analyses, accounting for 61.3 percent of the total variance for the United States and 65.3 percent for the United Kingdom (see Table 5). Interestingly, not only did these scales score the highest in percentage of total variance for both countries but they were also the ones with the highest level of commonality. Factor 1 highlights four identical items with surprisingly similar loadings, which we have termed *people and quality*.

Factor 2 gives a Cattell's Index of 0.8 and is significant at 0.1 percent. It has therefore been termed *informality and innovation* in both cases.

Table 6

Factor Structure of Market Orientation Items—United Kingdom

	Factor 1	Factor 2
	MOAK	MOBK
MO1	—	—
MO2	0.76059	—
MO3	0.80051	—
MO4	—	0.81037
MO5	0.79466	—
MO6	—	0.71272
Reliability estimates: Cronbach		
	0.7048	0.3091

Key: MOAK—people and quality; MOBK—product concern.

Market orientation

Market orientation emerged as the weakest scale in both analyses (see Table 6). No factor survived the reliability test for the United States; and only factor 1, accounting for 35.2 percent of the variance, met reliability criteria for the United Kingdom. We have termed this factor *people and quality*, reflecting a preoccupation with delivering good products to the customer.

Regression analysis

Following the refinement of each of the scales described above, the composite scores provided the basis for further analysis. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to determine the interrelationship of the scales (see Tables 7 and 8).

It is clear from Tables 7 and 8 that there is substantial evidence that the subscales are intercorrelated. Thus, the hypothesis is supported that, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, firms that can be characterized as close to their customers and show an identifiable set of corporate values are those that

Table 7

**Correlation Coefficients among Strategic Marketing Effectiveness,
Customer Closeness, and Corporate Values Scales—United States**

	MEAS	MEBS	MECS	CCAS	CCBS	CVAS	CVBS
MEAS	—						
MEBS	0.5594**	—					
MECS	0.4723**	0.3250**	—				
CCAS	0.2211*	0.0668	0.2578**	—			
CCBS	0.2168*	0.1005	0.2164*	0.3365**	—		
CVAS	0.4745**	0.3291**	0.3935**	0.2931**	0.3968**	—	
CVBS	0.3121**	0.1029	0.3664**	0.3451**	0.3965**	0.4500**	—

*Significant at 1% SL.

**Significant at 0.1% SL.

Key: MEAS—marketing efficiency; MEBS—customer philosophy; MECS—marketing organization; CCAS—customer awareness; CCBS—customer service; CVAS—people and quality; CVBS—informality and innovation.

Table 8

**Correlation Coefficients among Strategic Marketing Effectiveness,
Customer Closeness, Market Orientation, and Corporate Values
Scales—United Kingdom**

	MEAK	MEBK	MECK	CCAK	MOAK	CVAK	CVBK
MEAK	—						
MEBK	0.5813**	—					
MECK	0.4019**	0.4809**	—				
CCAK	0.4918**	0.4158**	0.3867**	—			
MOAK	0.5485**	0.5359**	0.4169**	0.4854**	—		
CVAK	0.5933**	0.4205**	0.4643**	0.6837**	0.4463**	—	
CVBK	0.4205**	0.2297*	0.2480**	0.5223**	0.2181*	0.6985**	—

*Significant at 1% SL.

**Significant at 0.1% SL.

Key: MEAK—organization and efficiency; MEBK—customer philosophy; MECK—market information; CCAK—customer closeness; MOAK—people and quality; CVAK—people and quality; CVBK—informality and innovation.

demonstrate superior strategic marketing effectiveness. The evidence regarding market orientation is mixed and requires further refinement of the scales of measurement.

The question that automatically follows from the above analysis is, Which of the various measures of corporate culture are the best predictors of performance in the marketplace as measured by the company's strategic marketing effectiveness? No guidance is obtained from Tables 7 and 8 since all the factors are highly correlated and it may not be appropriate to use the four independent variables simultaneously to predict strategic marketing effectiveness.

Mindful of this, we analyzed the data further, by stepwise multiple regression. For each country three analyses were conducted, using the three strategic marketing effectiveness scales as the dependent variable (see Tables 9 and 10).

Results from this analysis justified caution since the stepwise regression supported the inclusion of at most two subscales as predictors of the dependent variables. Although direct statistical comparison of the two data sets is constrained by the fact that two of the three strategic marketing effectiveness factors are different, it is striking that the common factor of people and quality emerges as the best predictor for all of the American and for two of three of the British factors. Product concern emerges as the best predictor of customer philosophy in the United Kingdom.

Conclusion

The first aim of this study was to establish the ways in which British and American companies characterize their strategic marketing effectiveness and their corporate culture and beliefs. Overall, the results are remarkably similar, the differences being in emphasis in the factors that emerged rather than in fundamental structure, thus supporting the underlying theory that corporate culture characteristics transcend the two continents, and should not be subject to assumptions of ethnocentricity. Moreover, not

Table 9

Stepwise Regression Analysis—United States

	Dependent variable		
	Marketing efficiency	Customer philosophy	Marketing organization
<i>Standardized regression coefficients</i>			
Customer closeness			
CCAS: Customer awareness	--	--	--
CCBS: Customer service	--	--	--
Corporate values			
CVAS: People and quality	0.4838	0.3276	0.3147
CVAB: Informality and innovation	--	--	0.2397
Constant	-1.5008	1.3397	-0.4024
Adjusted <i>r</i>	0.2290	0.1015	0.2202
<i>F</i> -value	46.4544	18.2747	22.6042
Significance	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

only were these similarities essentially animate in their respective qualities but the high loadings for the two factors "people and quality" and "informality and innovation" indicate a transatlantic congruence of corporate values.

The second aim of the research was to test for a relationship between the effectiveness of the firm in the marketplace (strategic marketing effectiveness) and the predominant culture within the organization. The results for both the United Kingdom and the United States are almost identical. Despite the subtle variations in the definition, the *best predictor* of strategic marketing effectiveness for five of the six factors is *people and quality*, a factor that is quintessentially animate in all its aspects: it is a condition of preoccupation with quality and personal empathy, an outward orientation demonstrating pride in the quality of the product and

Table 10

Stepwise Regression Analysis—United Kingdom

	Dependent variable		
	Organization/ efficiency	Customer philosophy	Market information
<i>Standardized regression coefficients</i>			
Customer closeness			
CCAK:	—	—	—
Corporate values			
CVAK: People and quality	0.5695	—	0.0951
CVBK: Informality and innovation	—	—	—
Market orientation			
MOBK: Product concern	0.7472	0.7744	0.1342
<i>Constant</i>	2.1854	11.1551	1.9182
<i>Adjusted r</i>	0.4158	0.1662	0.1896
<i>F-value</i>	32.3232	18.1843	10.9444
<i>Significance</i>	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

in the paramount value of the individual to effect this. The emphasis of academics on the organization's "state of mind" [20] and upon an identifiable corporate culture [13,27,28] is thus supported.

In 1965, Fiedler [29] highlighted the need to "engineer the job to fit the manager" rather than the other way around. Two decades later, this need to concentrate on human values appears just as apposite. In both the United Kingdom and the United States, top management wishing to improve the likelihood of achieving strategic marketing effectiveness should foster and emphasize the human element.

Note

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