

MER Model of Integral Management: Culture as Enterprise's Key Success Factor

Dr. Jernej Belak

Faculty of Economics and Business Maribor
Razlagova 14, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia
E-mail: jernej.belak@uni-mb.si

Dr. Borut Milfelner

Faculty of Economics and Business Maribor
Razlagova 14, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia
E-mail: borut.milfelner@uni-mb.si

Abstract: Enterprise culture is judged by many acknowledged scientists and researchers now as a major determinant of any enterprise's success. The present article shows the research cognitions on the impact of enterprise culture to the success of the enterprises observed.

Keywords: MER Model, integral management, enterprise culture, enterprise's success, enterprise key success factors

1 Introduction

Enterprise culture is judged by many now as a major determinant of any company's success in terms of performance, especially through improvements in employee morale [28]. Various researches show that enterprise culture with its values is of essential meaning by fostering business ethics in a sense of assuring enterprise's success [10, 8, 7, 16, 15]. Hofstede [23, 24] argues that enterprise culture as the collective programming of the mind distinguishes participants of one enterprise from another [22]. Such collective programming is possible if enterprise culture can be considered as defined also by Lewis [33] as basic assumptions that people in an enterprise hold and share about that enterprise. Those assumptions are implied in their shared feelings, beliefs and values and embodied in symbols, processes, forms and some aspects of patterned group

behavior. Further Hofstede [23, 24, 25] argues that enterprise culture distinct from both individual personality (one person) and human nature (all humans).

Considering the theories and research cognitions presented in this paper, we can state that organizational culture with its values and norms is of essential meaning for ensuring the long term success of an enterprise. Enterprise's culture has been defined as encompassing values, rules, beliefs and assumptions in handling and behaviour of (especially internal) enterprise's stakeholders which reflects internally as well externally the behaviour of an enterprise. Besides other relevant scientific literature and research cognitions, as well as world known models of enterprise management and governance, enterprise culture is perceived as one of the enterprise's key success factors in MER Model of Integral Management [9] (as shown in Figure 1).

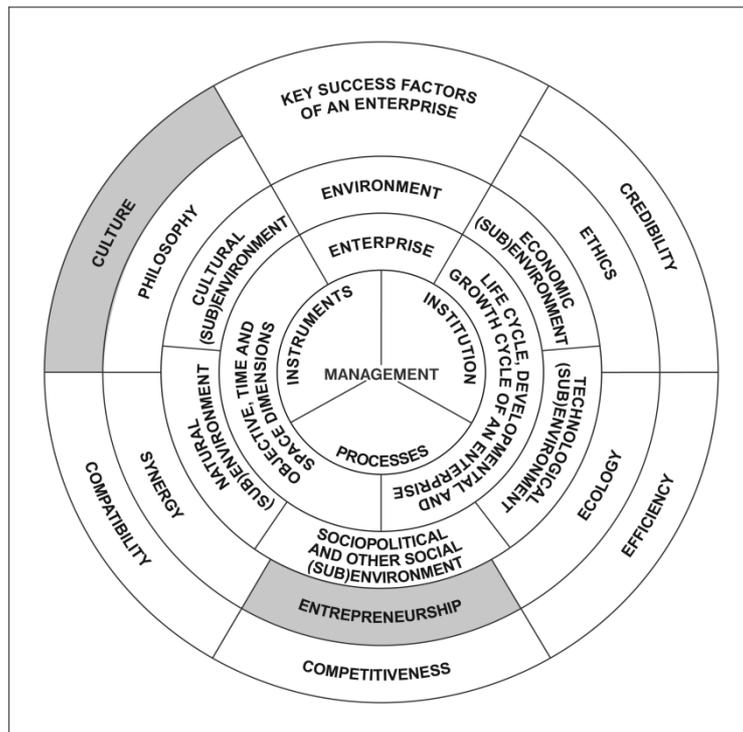


Figure 1
The MER Model of Integral Management

The present research is based on the premise that by ensuring their success the enterprises have to be oriented towards the external environment of its functioning as well as towards the internal environment of its functioning in order to be able to disclose and fulfill the real needs of the environment (market) and to realize and fulfill the needs of the employees (as well as other internal stakeholders) in order

to motivate and stimulate their innovative behavior as much as possible. Only this way the long term success of the enterprise will be assured.

2 Enterprise culture

Enterprise/corporate culture is a multifaceted construct. Various authors define it differently. Goffman [12] focused on the observed behavioral regularities in people's interactions, Homans [27] discussed the norms that evolve in working groups, Ouchi [35] stressed the philosophy that influences organizational policy and van Maaren [27] emphasized the rules for good understanding in an organization. More recently, enterprise/corporate culture has been defined as encompassing the assumptions, beliefs, goals, knowledge and values that are shared by organizational members [5, 14, 27, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42].

Various types of enterprise/corporate cultures have been identified – related to the dynamic nature of the industry concerned [19] and to the size of the organization (Gray, 2003). Several classifications have been proposed, the most often cited being those of Schwartz and Davis [42], Deal and Kennedy [14], Hofstede [22, 23, 24, 25], Schein [39, 40, 41], Sathe [36] and Cameron and Quinn [13]. Hofstede [21] proposed that enterprise culture could be classified by comparing the degree of individualism versus collectivism, the apparent power-distance metric, the tendency towards uncertainty avoidance, and the bias between masculinity and femininity. Kets De Vries [27], on the other hand, opted to derive his classification from characteristics of the prevailing mentality: a paranoid culture (a persecutory theme), an avoidance culture (a pervasive sense of futility), a charismatic culture (everything evolves around the leader), a bureaucratic culture (depersonalized and rigid), politicized culture (leadership responsibility is abdicated).

In Thommen's [44] opinion, an enterprise should emphasize its culture as much as to bring it into accordance with the enterprise's vision and strategy. Thommen [43] differentiates between strong and weak enterprise cultures. An enterprise with a strong culture is the one with a high level of values and high-norms anchoring, a high level of agreement, as well as high-culture compatibility between enterprise and the environment of its functioning.

More recently, Cameron and Quinn [13] have proposed a classification comprising four forms for culture audit and for comparison purposes – Clan, Hierarchy, Market and Adhocracy. Following the methodology developed by Cameron and Quinn (1999), these culture types can be assessed by observing the six key dimensions of enterprise culture: Dominant Characteristics, Organizational Leadership, Management of Employees, Organizational Glue, Strategic Emphasis, and Criteria for Success.

Webster [45] defines market culture as the component of enterprise culture that relates to values and beliefs that help management and employees to understand market. It sets norms of behaviour in the enterprise and the meaning that is vital for enterprise performance on the market. As such market culture relates to the unwritten policies and guidelines which provide employees with behavioural norms, to the importance the enterprise as a whole places on the marketing function, and to the manner in which marketing activities are executed.

As a business philosophy, market oriented enterprise culture is an entity of three key elements. According to Narver & Slater [33] the enterprises with strong elements of customer oriented culture demonstrate high customer and competitor orientation, and have strongly interrelated functions. Customer orientation is the key component of market culture which enables managers and employees to understand customer needs and wants as well as customer present and future product value evaluation. Competitor orientation on the other side brings understanding of short term competitor strengths and weaknesses and long term competitor strategies. This component is also important, since competitor strategies can strongly influence customer wants and needs, their value perceptions as well as their behaviour. The third component (interfunctional coordination) relates to customer information interchange throughout the enterprise and to coordination of efforts oriented towards customers. The third component is the most culture related and is also the most difficult to achieve.

Customer oriented culture of an enterprise should enhance customer-perceived quality by helping to create and maintain superior customer value. Since enterprises with strong customer orientation possess the basis for rapid adaptation to customers' manifest and latent needs, which may translate into superior new product success, market share and profitability [2, 34]. The customer oriented enterprise culture has been proposed as a key differentiating resource and a key predictor of enterprise performance [1]. According to that we hypothesize:

H1: The presence of customer oriented enterprise culture positively impacts market performance of enterprise.

H2: The presence of customer oriented enterprise culture positively impacts financial performance of enterprise.

By drawing the analogy with customer oriented enterprise culture, employee elements one can also define the kind of culture that stimulates the application of marketing, human resource management, and allied theories, techniques, and principles to motivate, mobilize, and manage internal stakeholders at all hierarchical levels of the enterprise's process of management and governance to continuously improve the way they serve external stakeholders and each other. Although some early authors have referred to enterprise's internal stakeholders activities as the one that treats employees of the enterprises as internal customers [3], it is reasonable to argue that the cultural view is more suitable to explain in what way satisfied internal customers (stakeholders) can contribute to higher

enterprise's performance. Such culture or behaviour as a result of culture is frequently defined as enterprise's internal market orientation in literature [e.g. 32, 20]. According to Lings [31] activities resulting from employee oriented enterprise culture incorporate cultural and behavioural dimension and are referred to as internal market orientation in the sense of identifying and satisfying the wants and needs of employees as a prerequisite to satisfying the wants and needs of external customers. Such internal market oriented behaviour displayed by managers should foster employee identification with the organisation, reduce their dysfunctional behaviours and increase behaviours that are compliant with organisational strategies [32].

In the sense of Narver and Slater's [33] and Kohli and Jaworsky's [30] internally oriented enterprise culture can be operationalized as enterprise's orientation on: employees, competitors (on the employee market), and as interfunctional coordination on internal market. Measurement of those three dimensions shows the presence of the employee oriented enterprise culture. Each of these elements contain: internal market intelligence generation (e.g. conditions of external employee market, identification of value exchange), internal market intelligence dissemination (between employees and management) and internal market responsiveness (e.g. actions for delivering employee value).

Since the internally oriented enterprise culture can build a system of employee and management values that guide the enterprise's behaviour towards the goal of improving customer value such culture can also influence market and financial performance of the enterprise in the sense of being related with higher external customer quality perception, external customer satisfaction, market shares and sales volume. All four market performance dimensions can be influenced by employee attitudes and behaviours that reduce dysfunctional behaviours and increases behaviours compliant with organisational strategies [32]. Consequently we hypothesise that:

H3: The presence of employee oriented enterprise culture positively impacts market performance of enterprise.

H4: The presence of employee oriented enterprise culture positively impacts financial performance of enterprise.

3 Methodology

Measurement instrument for the empirical model verification was developed in three phases. In the first phase some of the relevant items for the questionnaire were taken from the relevant literature. For the measurement of internal market culture we used adapted items from Gounaris [20] and Lings [31]. The questions were adapted in the way that the cultural elements could be captured in the larger scale. External market culture was measured using the fourteen adapted items from Narver and Slater's [33] scale. Some additional items were added in order to ensure higher consistency of the measure. In the second phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with senior marketing executives in 17 enterprises in Slovenia. In the third phase the questionnaire was examined by 5 expert judges (4 in the field of marketing and marketing resources and 1 in the field of finance) in terms of content validity and in order to avoid redundancy of the questions. In the final study the items for internal market culture (12) and external market culture (17) were measured on the 7 point Likert scale (from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree"). Additional 4 items were generated for measurement of market performance. The respondents were asked to evaluate their market performance on the 7 point scale from "much worse" to "much better" in comparison with their key competitors in the period of past 3 years.

The main informants were selected from every company in the position of CEO or member of the Board of Directors. The questionnaire was mailed to the 3000 randomly selected companies with more than 20 employees, selected from the population of 3475 companies in Slovenia with more than 20 employees. The final sample consisted of 415 companies, representing a response rate of 13.8%. Responding companies came from a variety of industries (manufacturing 40.8%, construction 13.2%, wholesale and retail 11.0%, real estate 10.0%, transportation 5.1%, catering industry 4.9%, and other industries 14.7%).

Dimensionality of the single constructs (market orientation, internal marketing, customer loyalty, market share/sales volume, and financial performance) was assessed. Confirmatory factor analyses

4 Measurement constructs reliability and validity

The dimensionality of the single constructs (market orientation, internal marketing, customer loyalty, market share/sales volume, and financial performance) was assessed with confirmatory factor analyses (CFA). Summary statistics in Table 1 show that according to our conceptualization customers and employee oriented business culture constructs are multi-dimensional constructs.

	Customer oriented business culture	Employee oriented business culture	Market and financial performance CFA
One-factor model	1 factor $\chi^2/df = 300.55 / 20$ $p < .05$ RMSEA = .184 NNFI = .696 CFI = .783 GFI = .777	1 factor $\chi^2/df = 432.90 / 44$ $p < 0.05$ RMSEA = .164 NNFI = .682 CFI = .746 GFI = .805	
Multi-factor model	3 factors* $\chi^2/df = 18.16 / 17$ $p = .378$ RMSEA = .013 NNFI = .990 CFI = .994 GFI = .984	3 factors** $\chi^2/df = 34.36 / 24$ $p = .078$ RMSEA = .032 NNFI = .977 CFI = .985 GFI = .978	2 factors $\chi^2/df = 32.68 / 8$ $p > .05$ RMSEA = .086 NNFI = .955 CFI = .976 GFI = .973

Table 1
Statistics of CFA for customer and employee oriented business culture, market, and financial performance

* Internal market orientation – employees orientation, competitors (on the employee market) orientation, and interfunctional coordination

** Market orientation - customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination

The reliability (table 2) coefficient of the scales ranges from .76 to .91 which met the standard of 0.6 as suggested by Fornell and Larcker [17]. Evidence of convergent validity was determined by inspection of the variance extracted for each factor as shown in Table 3. According to Fornell and Larcker [17], convergent validity is established if the variance extracted value exceeds 0.50 for

a factor, and for all of the cases this criteria is met. Additionally all items of the single measures loaded significantly on their underlying factors (all loadings were higher than .50 with significant t values). Discriminant validity was assessed with the pair-wise squared correlations comparison with the variance extracted estimates for the dimensions making up each possible pair. In every case the Fornell-Larcker criteria was met which means that the variance extracted estimates exceeded the square of the correlation between the factors making up each pair.

		Loadings (λ coefficients)	CR	AVE
Customer oriented business culture - Customer orientation	We closely monitor and assess our level of commitment in serving customers' needs.	.826	.76	.52
	We pay close attention to after-sales service.	.549		
	Our strategy for competitive advantage is based on our understanding of customers' needs	.765		
Customer oriented business culture - Interfunctional coordination	Market information is shared with all departments.	.834	.79	.55
	All departments are involved in preparing business plans/strategies.	.763		
	Information about customers is freely communicated throughout our organization	.593		
Customer oriented business culture - Competitor orientation	We respond rapidly to competitive actions.	.734	.80	.56
	Top management regularly discuss competitors' strength and weaknesses.	.780		
	We regularly monitor our competitors' marketing efforts.	.739		
Employee oriented business culture - Employee orientation	We aspire to high employee satisfaction.	.871	.89	.72
	The appreciation of the single employee is stressed strongly.	.798		
	We place great value on a feeling of belonging along the employees.	.881		
Employee oriented business culture - Competitor orientation	We systematically analyze the working conditions of employees working in competition.	.639	.81	.59
	We know the danger of losing our employees because of our competitors.	.835		
	We know about new jobs created that	.776		

(on the employee market)	could attract employees in this firm.			
Employee oriented business culture - Interfunctional coordination	In our company, we place great value on interfunctional teamwork. (marketing, R&D, production, etc.).	.893	.89	.80
	In our company, we aspire to a high degree of interfunctional information exchange.	.901		
Financial performance	Overall profit levels achieved compared to competitors (EBIT)	.881	.91	.78
	Return on investment compared to competitors (ROI)	.910		
	Profit margins compared to competitors	.863		
Market performance	Market share compared to competitors.	.879	.83	.62
	Sales volume achieved compared to competitors.	.896		
	Levels of customer satisfaction compared to competitors	.546		

Table 2:
Items, standardized loadings, CR and AVE

5 Results

In the second stage of the research, the hypotheses were tested with multivariate (Tables 3 and 4) regression analysis where the single constructs of customer and employee business culture were treated as predictor variables and market and financial performance as dependent variables. To obtain more favourable number of parameters to be estimated, we conducted an additional simplification from 23 indicators to final 8 factors computed according to CFA. This was achieved by averaging the corresponding indicators leading to a single composite factor. The final regression models are presented in tables 3 and 4.

	Beta	t	p values	Varinace inflation factor
(Constant)		9.749	p<.01	
Customer orientation	.210	3.871	p<.01	1.500
Competitor orientation	.129	2.376	p<.05	1.502
Interfunctional coordination	.017	.327	n.s	1.375
Dependent variable: market performance; $R^2=.099$; p<.01; Durbin-Watson coefficient=1,96				
	Beta	t	p values	Varinace inflation factor
(Constant)		7.290	p<.01	
Customer orientation	.282	5.219	p<.01	1.500
Competitor orientation	.091	1.688	p<.10	1.502
Interfunctional coordination	-.025	-.480	n.s	1.375
Dependent variable: financial performance; $R^2=.107$; p<.01; Durbin-Watson coefficient=1,90				

Table 3

Regression model 1 - Customer oriented business culture constructs impact on market and financial performance

As can be seen from table 3 the majority of impacts are positive and statistically significant. Customer orientation and competitor orientation significantly positively impacts market performance and financial performance. In both models interfunctional coordination link to both performances is non-significant. Variance inflation factors (VIF) in both models are low (under 5) suggesting that there is no problem with multicollinearity. According to that we can give support to hypotheses H1 and H2.

	Beta	t	p values	Varinace inflation factor
(Constant)		13.011	p<.01	
Employee orientation	.052	.798	n.s	2.025
Competitor orientation (on the employee market)	-.025	-.460	n.s	1.420
Interfunctional coordination on internal markets	.142	2.230	p<.05	1.918
Dependent variable: market performance; $R^2=.024$; p<.01; Durbin-Watson coefficient=2.10				
	Beta	t	p values	Varinace inflation factor
(Constant)		10.643	p<.01	
Employee orientation	.221	3.410	p<.01	2.025
Competitor orientation (on the employee market)	-.074	-1.369	n.s	1.420
Interfunctional coordination on internal markets	.035	.558	n.s	1.918
Dependent variable: financial performance; $R^2=.047$; p<.01; Durbin-Watson coefficient=1.90				

Table 4
Regression model 2 - Employee oriented business culture constructs impact on market and financial performance

Contrary to the table 3, the table 4 suggests that the employee oriented culture does not impact market and financial performance. In this case the majority of impacts are not statistically significant. Only interfunctional coordination on internal markets statistically significantly positively impacts market performance and employee orientation significantly positively impacts financial performance. All other relationships are non-significant. Variance inflation factors (VIF) in both models once again shows that there is no problem with multicollinearity. According to the research results we reject hypotheses H3 and H4.

Conclusions

The presented research examined enterprise culture as one of the enterprise's key success factors as thought and perceived by MER Model of Integral Management. Our research cognitions show that enterprises, which are more customer (externally) oriented, show better market performance as well as better financial performance. The cognitions also show that more employee (internally) oriented enterprises, show positive impact to their market as well as to their financial performance. These cognitions also partly confirm the theoretical argument that enterprise long term success can be ensured only by practicing the external (effectiveness) as well as internal (efficiency) orientation of enterprise, both together. Therefore, the further research should be done to in-depth explore the impact of both orientations (external and internal) to the enterprises' performance. In addition the research should explore also the impact of the social responsible behaviour (in relation to external and internal orientation) of the enterprises on their performance.

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