9.1 Introduction

This chapter consolidates the findings of the thesis. The chapter-wise summaries are given in the section 9.2, followed by the Contributions of the study in Section 9.3. Managerial implications are discussed in section 9.4. Section 9.5 deals with the recommendations for future research and section 9.6 presents the final conclusions.

9.2 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter One deals with an overview of the seafood industry and market orientation principles in general. Then the research questions to be addressed are detailed, followed by a list of the objectives of the study. The relevance of the study is elaborated in the next section. The final section of this chapter is the organization of the thesis and the chapter framework.

Chapter Two provides a detailed review of the market orientation framework and the literature review. The marketing concept is revisited, and the development of the concept of market orientation is traced. The various
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perspectives of market orientation are examined, followed by a detailed description of the market orientation constructs, the antecedents, the consequences and the moderating influences.

Chapter Three deals with the research hypotheses and sub hypotheses. A conceptual model of the market orientation framework is also presented here.

Chapter Four presents the research methodology. The research design of the study is specified, followed by a detailed description of the methods of data collection, the survey instrument and the data analysis tools used, and the assumptions of regression analysis.

Chapter Five provides the general picture of the Indian seafood processing firms. The details of the surveyed firms, including their marketing practices, the problems faced by them, their financial status and the characteristics of their top management are examined in this chapter.

Chapter Six provides the preliminary data analysis in the form of the descriptive statistics, the reliability and validity analyses and the correlation matrices.

Chapter Seven provides the empirical analyses of the hypotheses listed in Chapter Three. The testing of the hypotheses is done using multivariate regression analysis. The tool used is the stepwise regression analysis.
Chapter Eight discusses the results obtained in the previous chapter in the light of existing literature and examines how far the results are consistent with previous studies. This is followed by a listing of the limitations of this research study.

Chapter Nine is the final chapter of the thesis and seeks to consolidate the results of this study. It begins with an overview of the thesis by describing the summaries of all the chapters. It is then followed by the listing of the contributions of this study, the managerial implications and the directions for future research. It is then followed by the conclusions.

9.3. Contributions of the Study

This thesis seeks to answer three research questions, namely:

- Does market orientation affect business performance in seafood processing firms in India?
- How do the antecedents proposed in the study affect the level of market orientation in seafood processing firms in India?
- Do environmental moderators such as market turbulence, competitive intensity and technological turbulence, strengthen or weaken the relationship between market orientation & performance in Indian seafood firms?
The study was successful in answering all the three research questions, and has made the following contributions to existing literature. The research is one of the first of its kind, to the author's knowledge, in the area of the seafood marketing in India, thus contributing to literature, and filling in a hitherto unexplored gap.

One of the major contributions of this study is that it was successful in forging a link between market orientation and business performance in seafood processing firms. The thesis was thus able to replicate the results of the studies conducted abroad under different settings. Thus, this thesis substantiates the findings of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and adds to existing literature. The adoption of market orientation by the seafood firms will lead to the improved financial performance as well as improved customer satisfaction and encourage repeated buying and customer loyalty to the firm. Market orientation also improves employee job satisfaction and commitment to the firm.

The second contribution of this study lies in its ability to strongly advocate the need for implementing market orientation principles in the seafood processing firms. The seafood processing industry is at a critical juncture now, when it is trying to establish its name as a strong contender in the global seafood trade
scenario. The application of market orientation principles will help improve its business performance as well as reinforce its image as responsible and world class exporters.

The third contribution is in the area of antecedents of market orientation. The study discusses the antecedents needed for the successful implementation of the market orientation principles. These precursors will help to ensure that a foundation for the adoption of market orientation is laid. The antecedents for the Indian seafood processing industry include top management emphasis, interdepartmental conflict, centralisation and reward system orientation. Thus the top management of the seafood processing firms needs to adopt market-oriented behaviour, encourage employees to be market oriented, support, guide and monitor the progress of implementation of market orientation principles, adopt a decentralised approach towards decision making, encourage employees to make work related decisions and to reward them justly and timely with the right kind of rewards, based on continuous performance appraisal. It is also seen that a judicious amount of interdepartmental conflict also leads to improved performance, although conflict can, if allowed to grow unhampered, defeat its own purpose. However, further studies are recommended under different settings, to critically examine the role of
antecedents on the market orientation, and to obtain results that can be
generalised.

Another important contribution was in the area of the moderators. This study
provides empirical evidence that market orientation increases in the wake of a
highly competitive environment, but remains unaffected by technological
turbulence and market turbulence. More work needs to be done in the area of
environmental moderators. Addition of other factors like strategy type, firm
size, etc to the existing moderators, may yield interesting results.

9.4 Managerial Implications

Empirical evidence presented in the earlier chapters proves that market
oriented behaviour increases business performance, and helps seafood
processing firms to develop sustainable competitive advantages. The next
question in line with this statement would be how to implement market
orientation in seafood firms? The preceding chapters have offered views as to
what constitutes market orientation behaviour. This section offers insights to
seafood industry managers as to the implementation process of market
orientation.
The survey revealed that the Indian seafood processing firms rated relationship with customers' as the highest competitive advantage, followed closely by Product Quality and Delivery of the products. The competitive advantages of production capacity and marketing capacity tied together at the fourth position.

An examination of the U.S. importer perception of the Indian seafood products, as per the market research conducted by MPEDA, in the year 2000 revealed that, they were generally unhappy with the product quality, workmanship, sanitation standards and business ethics of the exporters. Another major factor emerging from the market study of the US importers, wholesalers and retailers, conducted by the MPEDA, is the poor perception of the Indian products and the processors, as a whole, followed by a lack of awareness about Indian products in general. The importers also commented on the lack of effective market promotion and offered suggestions for improvement like organising trade shows, developing brand recognition, large-scale media advertising, developing product line and improving image.

Thus a wide gap exists between the perceptions of the Indian exporter and the U.S importer. Therefore, Indian seafood managers would need to look for ways and means to improve their image, increase their marketing skills, improve
product quality and develop sustainable competitive advantages, in order to be assured of a steady clientele, repeat sales and increasing profits over a long term. To develop these advantages, firms need to adopt a dual strategy of market orientation and the resource based view, offered by strategic management specialists. Market orientation helps the firms to attain an outside-in view of the firm, while the resource based view projects an inside-out view. Some Indian seafood firms have well developed resource-based competencies and are producers of world famous brands. As far as Indian firms are concerned, the key to business success lies in the adoption of market oriented competencies to complement the existing resource based competencies they have and thus develop a sustainable competitive advantage over other international firms.

Grant (1996) and Spender (1996) uphold the contribution of knowledge or intelligence as a significant competitive asset that a firm possesses, which also possesses the wherewithal to develop into a sustainable competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1986, 1991; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Peteraf, 1993; Conner, 1991). Market orientation also stresses on the importance of intelligence or knowledge management. Therefore one of the first prerequisites is that the firms should develop and institutionalise an intelligence-based
system, which collects both internal and external information, and collates the results to produce regular updated information for the perusal of the top management to enhance the efficacy of decision making.

Another important prerequisite for implementing market orientation would be to guarantee the total support of the top management. The top management should not only be enthusiastic about the project, they should also be willing to lead upfront all market oriented activities and should institutionalize market-oriented behaviour. They should be able to instill in the employees the necessity and the value of being customer-oriented, as customer focus lies at the centre of any market oriented activity.

The first task of the top management would be to define the vision and mission statements of the marketing organization. If such statements already exist, then they should be examined to see if it reflects the organization's new priorities, if not, it should be redefined, such that, it clearly states the desired future of the firm.

The next step is the process of rigorous assessment of the current level of performance (Van Raaij et al., 1998), holding as a benchmark the level they wish to attain, or modelling their performance according to the best performers in the industry. The usual performance indicators would be
customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, financial performance, sales growth, market growth, market share etc. The assessment of the present system of behaviour within the firm should also be done.

The identification of customer related processes within the business which need improvement comes next. These processes should be analysed and improved. The setting up of a team consisting of 2-5 members is necessary, to identify the above processes. The members should have representations from both the top management and the lower level employees. This team should be entrusted with the task of collecting information regarding the areas that need improvement. The information collected should be disseminated at all levels. The top management should sent personnel to visit the customers at regular intervals, in order to acquaint themselves with the changing culture and background settings, in addition to their business practices, product evaluation measures and their expectations regarding products.

Based on this information, a comprehensive marketing plan should be adopted, incorporating the consumer views, such that the firms are able to deliver exactly what the customers wish for. Delivery should be right on schedule and should contain the correct product specifications, and other labeling as required by the importer. The packaging should be trendy,
attractive and strong enough to withstand any wear and tear. Indian processors should adopt consumer packing. The quality of the product should be competitive enough with the products from other markets. Pricing should be competitive; the firm should try to obtain cost advantages, so that new markets are attracted, which will consequently result in higher profits. Product diversification is another strategy, by which the firms will be able to exert a stronger competitive pressure. Instead of concentrating on block frozen products, Indian processors could instead switch to cooking lines and value addition, taking advantage of the financial assistance schemes proposed by the MPEDA. India should strive to improve its global competitiveness; otherwise it will lose out on lucrative customers and deals. Drawing consumer attention to other products besides the usual shrimps, cuttle fish etc, would help in creating awareness about the diversity of the Indian seafood. Continuous contacts with the importers, followed by regular feedback, as well as enquiries about the importer's views on the product quality should be made, such that the importers feel that the processors are genuinely concerned and committed to them. The processors should work in conjunction with the MPEDA to develop a unique seafood logo for all seafood products, which would raise them to a branded status. Regular attendance of trade fairs, display of products in
attractive packing, working closely with MPEDA to try to tie up with cold store chains and supermarket chains, in the foreign countries, would go a long way to creating customized packs, instead of faceless bulk packs. This would also help to command a premium pricing, as the products reach the final customer, eliminating all middlemen and therefore loss in revenue.

The employees should be properly acquainted with the marketing strategy of the firm, and encouraged to incorporate a market oriented perspective in their behaviour and their activities. Top management should regularly provide feedback regarding employee performance, and should institute a performance appraisal system which should provide timely and just rewards. In order to stimulate motivation for exhibiting market oriented behavior, managers can also think of non-monetary, positive feedback mechanisms, which may be formal or informal, public or private such as an award program, or a 'pat on the back' (Van Raaij et al., 1998).

The implementation of market orientation necessitates adoption of a decentralised decision making pattern, low formalisation, low top management risk aversion and high interdepartmental connectedness. This would encourage employees to come up with innovative ideas, make them feel more responsible for the well-being of the firm and fellow employees, and foster in them a professional
and market oriented attitude. A system of continuous appraisal of processes, systems and people needs to be done regularly, using information technology as an enabler. Low risk aversion will help in creating innovative solutions to problems faced by the exporters. Working in close collaboration with MPEDA and the other fisheries research institutions would go a long way in improving product knowledge and increase available knowledge about customers.

Customer focus is at the heart of any market oriented activity (Day 1990; Deshpande et al., 1993), hence, the employees should never forget to view their customer interests as their first priority. Market oriented activity will also increase the employee satisfaction and productivity levels, besides increase the financial performance of the firm. Continuous intelligence generation, dissemination and responsiveness to the intelligence generates should be done regularly. The intelligence generated should include customer information, competitor information, trade related news, product development, dynamic environment, regulations, etc.

Top management should also endeavour to foster strong relationships between the members of different departments, and should keep conflict to a minimum. Employee training and development should be conducted on a regular basis, so that new skills and competencies will be developed by them, which will be
useful to the organization. Although conflict can be healthy, in that the firm may arrive at new and hitherto unconsidered solutions, approved by all departments, which may be the best possible solution under the circumstances, it can also be harmful if allowed to continue unhampered. Regular interdepartmental meetings, brainstorming sessions and informal get-togethers will go a long way to reduce conflict and tensions between departments, help in building healthy relationships which may translate into lessening of interdepartmental conflict in the long run and result in arriving at a amicable consensus in all decisions.

9.5 Recommendations for future research

The present research looks at market orientation from the marketer's point of view, which could give rise to biased or inflated opinions. Future research could help build up on customer information and customer perception regarding the market orientation of the Indian seafood firms. Additional research in similar settings would help in consolidating the results of this study. Future research on the extension of market orientation from the company specific level to the value chain level, would be significant, as it is the combined
effort of all these chain members that gives the final customer a perception about the product as a whole (Grunert et al., 2002).

9.6 Conclusion

This thesis studied the impact of market orientation on business performance, in the seafood industry, which is a unique situation wherein the firms were all 100% export oriented. The study was able to prove that in the context of the seafood industry, implementation of market orientation principles will lead to increase in business performance. The business performance variables were measured under two heads, namely economic performance and non-economic performance. Market orientation in Indian seafood firms was significantly and positively related to both the performance measures. Under the non-economic performance, were the customer and employee consequences. Again market orientation was positively and significantly related to both the consequences. The results were consistent with all major studies namely Narver and Slater (1990), Jaworski and Kohli (1993), Selnes et al., (1996), Pulendran et al., (2000), etc. Thus, the implication arising from the study is this: market orientation in Indian seafood processing firms increases their business performance. The implementation of market orientation will help the seafood
firms in gaining competitive advantages in exporting. This in turn will result in increased exports and the position of Indian seafood in the global market will be strengthened. It will thus become a leading player in the global fish trade.

Next, the focus was on the effect of the antecedents on the market orientation of a firm. It was seen that several factors were antecedents to the adoption of market orientation principles. They include top management emphasis, conflict, centralization and reward system. It is noted that top management emphasis and support is vital to the market orientation programme. The top management needs to adopt market oriented behaviour and reinforce the need for being market oriented, for it to percolate down the line.

Interdepartmental conflict is seen to affect market orientation positively. A large percent of the Indian seafood firms are traditionally family-owned companies, rather than professionally managed firms. This would result in promulgation of old ideas of management whereby, conflict was seen as a healthy exercise, which helped to build up each department’s efficiency. But, this view in the long run proves to be detrimental to the firm’s performance and must therefore be kept to a bare minimum, if any.

Decentralisation of decision making facilitates the participation of the lower level employees and builds up their motivational levels and commitment to the
firm. Thus employees are encouraged to make their own decisions, so that they can deal with customers faster and more efficiently.

Reward systems help improve an employee’s morale, provide encouragement and helps inculcate commitment and loyalty. It improves the employee’s self worth and fulfills his need for achievement. A satisfied employee works better, produces more output and needs less supervision, and is happy, thereby reducing costs to the company for replacement and retraining, if the employee quits.

Competitive intensity plays a moderating role on the market orientation-business performance. Thus in times of greater competition, the relationship between market orientation and business performance grows stronger.

Thus, this thesis was successful in investigating a positive relationship between business performance and market orientation. Future research could examine if there is a link between the market orientation and resource based view, both of which, as per strategic management dictates, are needed to secure competitive advantages for a firm. The significant relationship between market orientation and business performance holds clear implications for seafood managers. Adoption of market orientation principles will help them secure
superior business performance and could therefore give them the competitive advantages needed to excel in the international seafood trade.