

## Marketing and Competitive Advantage: From Formation of Organizational Culture to Achieving Customer Value-based Advantage

Mahdi Ghandi Arani

Graduate School of Management and Economics, Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, Iran

Manoochehr Najmi\*

Graduate School of Management and Economics, Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, Iran

### Abstract

One of the dominant paradigms in marketing strategy is achieving competitive advantage based on customer value. But the key challenge is how organizations can achieve value-based competitive advantage. The central theoretical contribution of this paper is to provide a conceptual framework that demonstrates how marketing through a series of causal chain can contribute to the competitive advantage of organizations. Based on this conceptual framework, the role of marketing initially begins with the formation of an organizational culture around two axes of market orientation and relational marketing. Then, formation of such a culture in the organization leads to the enhancing marketing resources. Resources alone are not effective in the performance of the organization; these resources show their impact when used in business processes. So we demonstrate how marketing resources exploited in business processes. These processes are a collection of strategic marketing capabilities that are categorized in different domains. Finally, it is shown that excellence in marketing capabilities leads to competitive advantage based on customer value.

**Keywords:** Customer value; Competitive advantage; Organizational culture; Marketing resources and capabilities.



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### 1. Introduction

In the existing literature, one of the most important contribution of marketing to organizational performance has been the creation of competitive advantage based on superior customer value proposition (Hunt and Madhavaram, 2019; Woodruff, 1997). On this basis, companies can gain competitive advantage in the market over competitors that can create more value for customers. Although existing studies show that marketing plays a pivotal role in achieving customer value-based competitive advantage, the key question is “how” marketing enables organizations to realize customer value-based competitive advantage?

Existing studies show that marketing contribute to organizational performance in diverse domains. Different marketing research streams highlight specific aspects of the marketing contributions. For example, the literature on “market-based orientation” has emphasized the formation of a customer-centric organizational culture (Moorman and Day, 2016). “Relationship marketing” literature has emphasized the importance of a long-term view of relationships with customers as an important organizational direction and an essential organizational value (Gummesson, 2017). In both domains, the marketing department can transmit these organizational values to other parts of the organization using inter-departmental interactions and so play an important role in shaping organizational culture (Lee *et al.*, 2014).

On the other hand, resource-based view is one of the main streams of research in the strategy literature, and in the field of strategic marketing there has been a lot of research in this area. Here, marketing plays a key role both in creating unique resources such as “market-based knowledge” and in applying them to marketing processes that can lead to the formation of “strategic capabilities” (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2014).

As has been mentioned, different research streams in extant literature has emphasized some specific aspects in the contributions of marketing to organizational performance. One of the main gaps in extant literature is that these different research streams are not interlinked (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2016). Contributions of marketing to organizational performance would be well explained when the “relationship” between its contributions explicated comprehensively. It has been suggested that in this conditions “conceptual papers” can clarify the link between different research streams (Gilson and Goldberg, 2015).

Such conceptual papers, by combining the existing literature can link different theoretical lenses and different research streams and provide a new insight into the phenomenon under investigation. The important difference between conceptual papers and review papers is that they do not merely summarize existing literature, but by combining different approaches, attempting to provide a new theoretical perspective on the subject under consideration, and thus the prominent feature of this type of conceptual article, in comparison with review papers, is the development of creative theory (Gilson and Goldberg, 2015). MacInnis, former editor of the leading Journal of Marketing, has emphasized the importance of publishing such conceptual papers in advancing marketing knowledge and stated that conceptual papers can play an important role in the development of grand theories. One of the important approaches in formulating conceptual papers based on the MacInnis framework is the “integrative”

\*Corresponding Author

approach. In this approach, the metaphor of the "architect" is used to explain the role of researchers. By bringing together the different components, a new building is created in the form of a theory in which the relationships between these components are determined so that the components that were originally completely different eventually become linked in a new structure. By bringing together the different components in a creative conceptual framework, new insights into the phenomenon under consideration would be provided (MacInnis, 2011).

One of the key challenges in this area is to elucidate the causal relationship between different components of marketing contributions for organizational performance. For example, many researchers have shown a positive relationship between "market orientation" and "organizational performance" (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Wei *et al.*, 2014). However, the chain of mediating constructs between "market orientation" and "organizational performance" has not been elucidated. We describe the different mediator factors that mediate these constructs. Our attempt here is to use a conceptual paper to link different research streams in the field of marketing that together provide a big picture of marketing's contributions for organizations. In this conceptual paper, we attempt to illustrate the different dimensions of marketing contributions for organizations by linking different research streams around a "causal chain". The causal chain in this theoretical framework illustrates how the marketing contribution for organizations in various axes ultimately leads to the creation of customer value-based competitive advantage.

Providing such a conceptual framework can explain, on the one hand, how to achieve customer value-based competitive advantage for organizations and, on the other hand, explain the relationships between the dimensions of marketing contributions to organizational performance. This big picture can be useful for both practitioners and academics. Practitioners with this conceptual framework can guide marketing activities in different areas, gain a more detailed understanding of the cause-and-effect relationships between the different actions, and obtain a practical guide in achieving competitive advantage. For academics, especially in the field of strategic marketing, this conceptual framework can explain how to achieve customer value-based competitive advantage by combining different theoretical perspectives in an innovative way.

In the following, at first a big picture of the conceptual framework of the paper is presented and then the dimensions of this conceptual framework are explicated. According to the conceptual framework, marketing first institutionalizes the value of customer in the organization by shaping the organizational culture around the two axes of "relational marketing" and "market orientation". The formation of such a culture within the organization enables market-based resources such as "customer knowledge" and "customer relationships" to be developed as strategic resources in the organization. These strategic resources can lead to added value when applied to organizational processes, and thus illustrated how strategic marketing resources can be incorporated into important processes such as "customer relationship management" and "new product development", so they can create "strategic marketing capabilities". Ultimately, it is clarified that utilizing strategic capabilities enables organizations to realize customer value-based competitive advantage. Finally, the research results are summarized, and some paths for future research are provided and theoretical and practical applications of research are presented.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

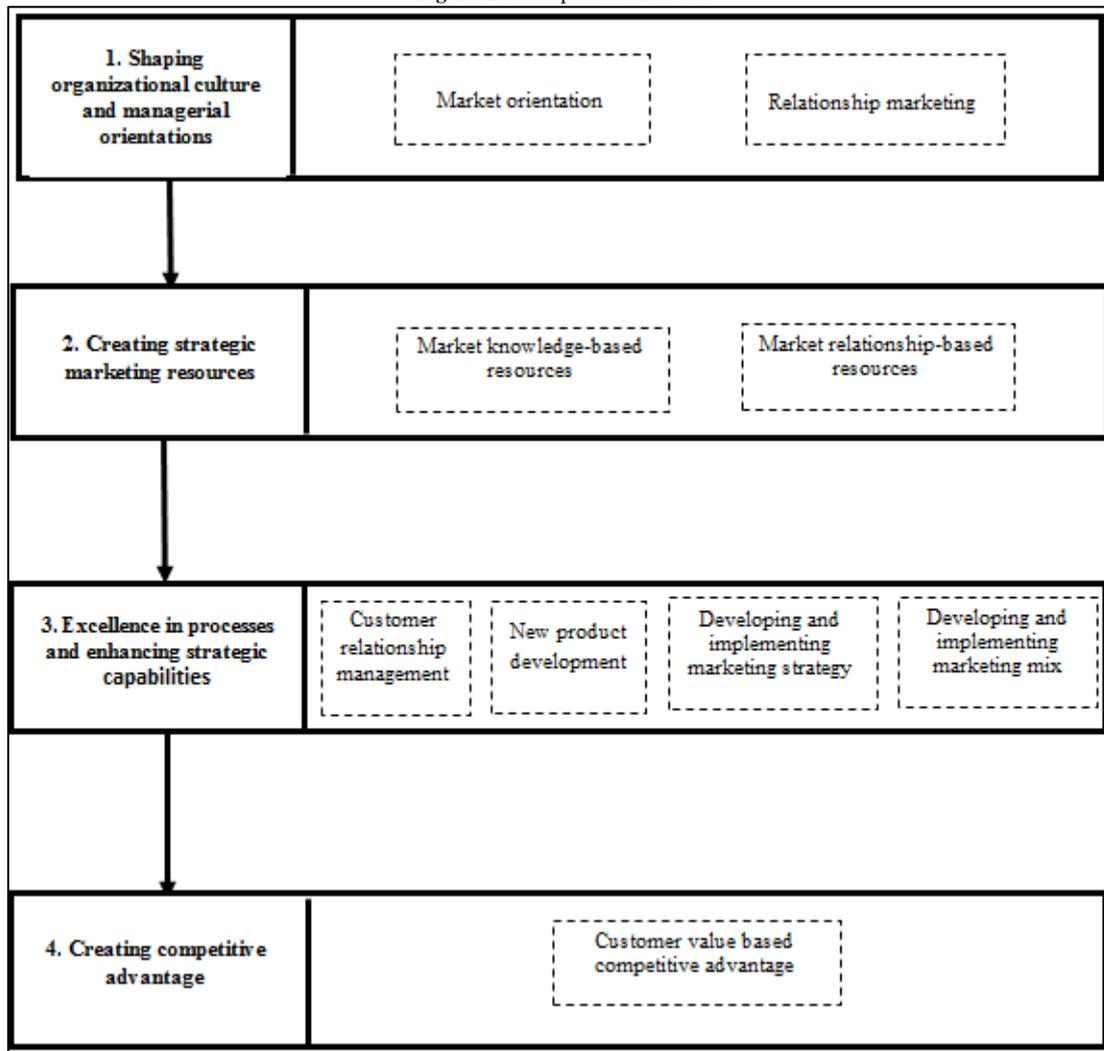
(Figure-1) presents the conceptual framework of the paper. As illustrated in (Figure-1), marketing can shape organizational culture and managerial orientations. "Market orientation" and "long-term relationship orientation" are key components of the marketing concept. These orientations are a set of values and beliefs that put a high priority on responding to customer needs and building a long-term relationship with them, and are institutionalized with the help of marketing in the organization (Moorman and Day, 2016; Webster, 1992).

The second contribution of marketing in organizational performance is based on a resource-based view in strategy that claims organizations to gain competitive advantage should exploit unique and valuable "resources" (Barney, 1991; Day, 2011). One of the most important marketing contributions in organizations is the provision of a set of resources (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2014). We categorize marketing-based resources into two groups: market-relationship resources and market-knowledge resources.

Enabling excellence in key business processes is the third marketing contribution. If marketing is to be institutionalized as an operational and intellectual discipline in organizations, it must affect the processes by which work is done (Srivastava *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, marketing resources are not valuable in themselves. These resources must be utilized through business processes (Porter, 1996; Vorhies *et al.*, 2010). We explain marketing contributions in four key business processes, including "customer relationship management", "new product development", "marketing strategy development and implementation" and "marketing mix development".

The fourth and final axis is the creation of competitive advantage based on customer value. Marketing plays an effective role in understanding what is valuable to customers. Marketing also contributes to the creation of competitive advantage based on customer value. By utilizing the strategic marketing capabilities, organizations achieve competitive advantage by creating superior value for customers (Day and Moorman, 2010; Woodruff, 1997).

Figure-1. Conceptual Framework



### 3. The First Axis of Marketing Contributions: Shaping Organizational Culture and Managerial Orientations

Culture is a set of core values and beliefs that establish norms for behavior in an organization. Organizational values and beliefs guide the activities of members of an organization (Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018; Schein, 1990). From a marketing management perspective, organizational culture can be understood as an organization or a knowledge system that explains why specific events occur in the organization and helps members understand how the organization function and provide norms for their behavior (Deshpande and Webster Jr, 1989; Larentis *et al.*, 2018). The "marketing concept" was adopted by managers in many organizations, and emphasized that marketing is so important that it should not be left to the marketing people alone (Webster, 2005). This type of marketing concept is a description of corporate culture, a prescriptive statement that the firm should always prioritize customer demands. It is a kind of managerial philosophy that defines the existence and legitimacy of the firm as satisfying customer needs (Gillespie *et al.*, 2008).

The central role of marketing managers at the corporate level is to institutionalize, as an advocate for customers, a set of values and beliefs that place customers at the top of the decision-making in the organizations. Informing about customer value propositions is part of this marketing task. Shaping organizational culture is one of the responsibilities of marketing managers at the corporate and business levels (Morgan and Vorhies, 2018).

We discuss in more detail the two main orientations of customer-centric organizations, namely "market orientation" and "relationship marketing".

#### 3.1. Market Orientation

Based on previous research, one of the main approaches in defining "market orientation" has been organizational culture. According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Morgan and Vorhies (2018), two characteristics of organizational culture in market-oriented organizations are: 1) placing the highest priority on creating and maintaining superior customer value and 2) institutionalizing the norms that lead to continuous acquisition and dissemination of market information and responding to them. Emphasizing customer value creation enables the organization to create a kind of organizational culture that institutionalizes the required behaviors in the organization (Narver and Slater, 1990; Sahi *et al.*, 2018).

Market orientation literature has generally found evidence that market orientation-based culture can be a determining factor in promoting business performance (Hooley *et al.*, 2005; Kohli *et al.*, 1993). However, subsequent research has shown that there are several mediating variables between market orientation and business performance. In the conceptual framework presented in this paper, these mediating constructs are comprehensively elaborated.

### 3.2. Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing is considered a paradigm shift in thinking and executing marketing (Deighton, 1996; Gummesson, 2017). Relationship marketing is defined as "all marketing activities towards establishing and maintaining a lasting relationship with customers" (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Payne and Chan, 2017). Understanding relationship marketing requires the distinction between pure "short-term transactions" and "long-term relationships" (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

Relational marketing must institutionalize itself in the organizational culture. Such a corporate culture creates a manifesto in which customers are valuable assets that must have a long-term view of their relationships with the organization. Customers are an important source of ideas for new products and services (Ling-Yee, 2011). Organizational culture based on customer value is a collective mindset that places the highest priority on establishing and maintaining a lasting and long-term relationship with customers and for shaping organizational behaviors, it creates norms about customer relationships (Payne *et al.*, 2017; Slater, 1997)

## 4. The Second Axis of Marketing Contributions: Creating Marketing-Based Resources

'Resource-based view' is one of the key paradigms in strategy literature (Morgan, 2012). Based on this approach, the firm's competitive advantage is derived from the use of valuable resources that have characteristics such as scarcity and non-imitability (Barney, 1991; Day, 2011). In the field of marketing strategy, some of these valuable resources are mentioned that can be the source of competitive advantage for firms. Strategy literature has distinguished between resource and capability. Resource refers to a set of tangible and intangible assets. Resources are in themselves a series of inputs and are valuable when they are transformed into outputs through appropriate "processes". These processes are referred them as "capabilities" in the strategy literature. We also consider the distinction between resources and capabilities: The second axis of the conceptual framework refers to marketing-based resources and the third axis refers to marketing-based capabilities (processes). Marketing plays a key role in the development of two categories of strategic resources: market knowledge-based resources and market relationship-based resources (Srivastava *et al.*, 2001).

### 4.1. Market Knowledge-Based Resources

These are types of knowledge and skills that an organization uses in a competitive environment. This knowledge includes both know-what and know-how about marketing issues (Srivastava *et al.*, 2001). Because the nature of demand and supply is heterogeneous, companies often have difficulty in understanding the exact needs of their customers and competitors' information (Hunt, 2000). Therefore, utilizing accurate market knowledge can be a scarce resource for companies. In addition, the skills and competencies (know-hows) that enable marketing activities such as pricing can be a unique source of value for organizations (Kozlenkova *et al.*, 2014).

### 4.2. Market Relationship-Based Resources

These include relationships that a company establishes over time with external stakeholders such as customers, marketing service providers, and sales channels. Although the organization has no legal ownership over these resources and cannot be bought and sold, these resources can be very valuable to companies in the marketing world. Closer communication with customers can lead to collaborative activities that are the source of the "co-creation" of values for customers based on mutual understanding (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Wang and Feng, 2012).

### 4.3 The Effect of Organizational Culture and Managerial Orientations on Marketing Resources

Organizational culture has a positive effect on marketing resources. For example, market orientation reflects a culture in which market-based learning is encouraged and systematically pursued to acquire, distribute, and respond to market information within the organization (Day and Moorman, 2010). Therefore, a market-oriented culture positively enhances the market knowledge-based resources.

Market orientation creates a "collective mind" (Gloor *et al.*, 2018; Weick and Roberts, 1993) or a belief system for the organization that recognizes the relationship with the customer as an asset and pursues ways to achieve a lasting relationship with the customer (Jayachandran *et al.*, 2005). Thus, relationship marketing as an organizational culture has a positive relationship with market relationship-based resources (Morgan *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, "customer-centric" organizational culture and managerial orientations enhance strategic marketing resources.

## 5. The Third Axis of Marketing Contributions: Providing Excellence in Key Business Processes

As mentioned earlier, strategy literature has distinguished between resource and capability. Capabilities are the business processes in which "resources" are used and transform them into valuable outputs (Morgan, 2012). One of the most important marketing contributions is the creation of excellence in business processes that leads to the development of a set of strategic capabilities (Dutta *et al.*, 2003; Morgan and Vorhies, 2018; Vorhies and Morgan, 2005).

Capability literature has categorized this concept based on different approaches. For example, Day has divided capabilities into three categories: inbound, outbound, and spanning capabilities (Day, 1994;2011). Vorhies and Morgan identified eight task-based capabilities that include: product development, pricing, distribution channel management, marketing communications, sales, marketing information management, marketing planning, and marketing execution (Morgan and Vorhies, 2018; Vorhies and Morgan, 2005).

By summing up the existing literature, we have integrated marketing capabilities into four major processes including: "new product development process", "customer relationship management process", "marketing strategy development and implementation process", and "marketing mix development and implementing process ". Following, we describe each of these four key processes in more detail.

### 5.1. New Product Development

The process of developing completely new products or modify existing products is a process that starts with understanding customer needs and ends up with launching products in the market. This process includes activities such as idea identification, product concept testing, product design and new product commercialization (Hauser *et al.*, 2006). The new product development process involves engaging multiple units and applying multiple areas of knowledge from market knowledge to technical know-how and product technology, so success in this process is not easy to achieve, thus effective execution of this process is a complex capability in organizations. Marketing as an integrating unit plays key roles in the new product development process (Hemonnet-Goujot *et al.*, 2019).

### 5.2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM involves the management of all activities aimed at identifying, attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships (Boulding *et al.*, 2005). These activities include processes that facilitate collaborative value creation with customers. The CRM process involves systematically and proactively managing relationships at all touch points across different channels. To this end, it is necessary to improve the customer experience smoothly and in the best possible way through the activities of all marketing channels members (Homburg *et al.*, 2017; Reinartz *et al.*, 2004). Organizations would be able to effectively implement customer relationship management processes that can integrate the many required infrastructure such as information technology, corporate culture, inter-departmental and inter-organizational communication. Success in this process is therefore complicated. Marketing as a unit that advocate customers in the organization can be very effective in enhancing this strategic capability.

### 5.3. Marketing Strategy Development and Implementation

This capability consists of two parts: "developing" and "implementing" marketing strategies. "Developing marketing strategy" is the ability to formulate marketing strategies that optimize the coordination between the organization's resources and market conditions and also cover the needs of different market segments effectively. This process takes a long-term view and is the basis for exploring new areas in product-market domains (Vorhies *et al.*, 2010). The ability to "execute" a marketing strategy is a process by which marketing strategy leads to the optimal allocation of resources across different domains in the short and medium term (Noble and Mokwa, 1999). In many organizations, implementing marketing strategies require cross-functional and complex communication with different parts of the organization (Hughes *et al.*, 2012). For example, the relationship between sales and marketing departments, which is an important challenge due to the structural differences between them, plays an important role in the success of implementing marketing strategies (Malshe and Sohi, 2009).

### 5.4. Marketing Mix Development and Implementing

The marketing mix classically comprises four sections: product management, pricing, marketing channel management and marketing communications management. In product management capability, the organization develops and manages its product portfolio through customer-centric innovations. Customer-centered innovation is the degree to which customers are involved in product development (Ellonen *et al.*, 2011; Ramaswami *et al.*, 2009). Pricing is the ability to extract the best revenue from customers so that the organization can proportionally capture optimal value from customer relationships (Andersson, 2013; Dutta *et al.*, 2003; Homburg *et al.*, 2012). Distribution channel management is the ability of an organization to create a marketing channel to deliver value to end users and consumers (Anderson *et al.*, 1997; Frazier, 1999; Homburg *et al.*, 2014b). Promotion and marketing communications are the ability of the organization to manage all informing and promoting activities so that enhance perceived customer value. In this process, the various components of the promotional mix must be creatively combined and coordinated (Vorhies *et al.*, 2010). Integration between departments is crucial in this area so that integrated marketing communications is an important challenge for organizations. The four areas that are mentioned in the mix of marketing components are important both in the "formulation" of the plans (which leads to the developing the

marketing plan) and in the “implementation” of the marketing plan and the success of organizations in a competitive environment requires empowerment in this important area.

### 5.5. The Effect of Marketing Resources on Business Processes (Marketing Capabilities)

There can be many relationships between the components of marketing resources (second axes) and the business process components (third axes). However, the purpose of our research is not to cover the pairwise relationships between all the components of the second and third axes, and thus to explain the general relations between the second and third axes, we show some manifestations of the relationship between the components of two axes. For example, previous research has shown that customer relationship-based resources are one of the cornerstones of new product development in a way that co-create customer value by collaborating with customers in the new product development process (O’Hern and Rindfleisch, 2017). These studies show that relational marketing “resources” can be used effectively in marketing “capabilities” such as new product development. On the other hand, understanding customer knowledge is an important resource in enhancing the ability to develop marketing strategies (Calof *et al.*, 2008). In-depth insights from customers, not only at the strategic level but also at the operational level, can optimize marketing mix components and the preparation of marketing plans, and thus market knowledge demonstrates its impact on optimizing all marketing mixes (Peyne and Chan, 2017). Relationship-based resources that are the result of a long-term customer look are also key to enhancing the customer relationship management process, so this important resource can enhance the CRM as a strategic marketing capability (Peyne and Chan, 2017). Therefore, as described above, utilizing strategic marketing resources can provide excellence in key marketing processes and thereby enhance strategic marketing capabilities.

## 6. The Fourth Axis of Marketing Contributions: Creating Competitive Advantage Based on Customer Value

According to the official definition provided by AMA, “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offers that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (Association, 2007; Baker, 2016). As you can see, customer value is a very key concept in marketing so that all activities and processes lead to customer value. There are several definitions for customer value. According to one of the most common definitions used in most research, customer value is all the benefits that the customer perceives from the product against all the costs to pay for the product (Kumar and Reinartz, 2016). Customer value is more what the customer “perceives” than what is “said” by the producer. These perceptions usually include a compromise between what the customer receives (such as quality, benefits, services, ...) and what he or she loses in for obtaining or using the product (such as price, time, risk, etc.) (Payne and Frow, 2017).

Marketing research has shown that superior customer value is the main source of competitive advantage and as a result a customer value-based theory of competitive advantage has been proposed (Woodruff, 1997). In general, the dominant paradigm in the marketing literature is the formation of unique capabilities that enable organization to provide “superior customer value” compared to competitors (Arnett *et al.*, 2018; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Marketing plays an effective role in understanding what is valuable to customers and creates value for them. For example, in “value hierarchy model”, it determines how product features can be designed to deliver the benefits to customers and help them achieve the values they pursue in life (Pentti *et al.*, 2017; Woodruff, 1997). The use of techniques such as laddering is common practice in marketing research that have been developed based on value hierarchy model (Woodruff *et al.*, 2014).

Delivering superior customer value is at the heart of competitive advantage theory. The value of an offer to a customer is always relative. If a customer perceives that the quality-price ratio provided by the alternative supplier is greater, then the chance of changing the supplier increases. Value can be increased by increasing the benefits or by decreasing the cost *ceteris paribus* (Kumar and Reinartz, 2016; Slater and Narver, 1992). Thus, organization can gain competitive advantage by understanding the sources of value for their customers and delivering superior value against competitors (Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

### 6.1. The impact of Business Processes on Delivering Superior Customer Value

Whether marketing viewed as a discipline, a function, or a set of activities, marketing academics have for many years assumed that the main purpose of marketing is to attract and retain customers by delivering superior value (Kumar and Reinartz, 2016; Srivastava *et al.*, 1999). Business processes are key drivers of delivering customer value. Such strategic capabilities enable the organization to deliver superior value compared to competitors. Marketing plays a key role in these business processes (Davenport, 1998; Morgan and Vorhies, 2018).

The new product development process is one of the key tools in creating value for customers. A proper understanding of customer needs will lead to the development of innovative products that will satisfy customer needs (Drechsler *et al.*, 2013). Also, the process of formulating marketing strategies will enable organizations to achieve competitive advantage in different market segments. Adjusting the marketing mix in the form of a marketing plan can turn these strategies into tangible actions for customers. Taking advantage of customer insights and long-term relationships with them are key marketing tools to create competitive advantage. In other words, market-based knowledge and marketing relationships as a strategic resource when used effectively in business processes will enhance strategic marketing capabilities that enable organizations to create superior value for customers (Vorhies *et al.*, 2010).

## 7. Conclusion

The concept of customer value has been at the heart of the marketing definition, and the dominant research in the strategic marketing literature is that delivering superior value to customers can lead to competitive advantage. The key question is how organizations can achieve value-based competitive advantage. On the other hand, different research streams have emerged in the field of marketing where marketing has been identified as key contributor to organizational performance, but one of the key gaps in existing research is that the relationship between these different theoretical lenses has not been clarified. Conceptual papers form the link between seemingly different research streams by integrating them creatively and play an important part in the development of theory. This research aims to develop a theory that categorizes different research streams in the field of strategic marketing into a “causal chain” centered on achieving value-based competitive advantage. Based on the theoretical framework presented, marketing's contribution to business performance is first determined by shaping the organizational culture around the two axes of “market orientation” and “relational marketing”. Institutionalizing these two important orientations in the form of shared values in corporate culture and norms expected from all employees is an important marketing contribution to organizational performance. The formation of such a culture within the organization leads to the reinforcement of strategic marketing resources. Customer-related knowledge as well as customer relationships are strategic marketing resources. These resources are used in important marketing processes such as new product development, formulation and implementation of marketing strategies and programs, and customer relationship management. Excellence in these business processes is very complex. Achieving strategic capabilities is facilitated by employing strategic marketing resources in business processes. These strategic capabilities are the main drivers of organizations to achieve competitive advantage based on customer value.

### 7.1. Practical Applications

Executives can use the results of this research in practice. Achieving value-based competitive advantage is one of the key goals of managers, and recent studies show most of companies offer superior value to customers in formal documents such as company vision or mission statements (Payne *et al.*, 2017). The key question is how executives can achieve this. The results of the study show that executives can achieve value-based competitiveness through a chain of activities to create superior value for customers. By shaping the corporate culture around the customer, it is possible to create strategic marketing resources. These resources are valuable when used in business processes or in other words, strategic marketing capabilities. Strengthening these strategic capabilities in practice enables executives to achieve value-based competitive advantage. In addition, the current research has provided a comprehensive classification of different research streams focused on contributions of marketing to organizational performance and the results can be a practical guide for managers in using extant research.

### 7.2. Theoretical Implications

Different research streams have emerged in the field of marketing, each of which somehow addresses the question of marketing contributions to business performance. These various theoretical approaches need to be categorized in such a way as that determine the relationship between different research streams within the marketing field. For example, classically market orientation has been directly linked to business performance, but current research has elucidated the mediating constructs between market orientation and achieving value-based competitive advantage as an important contribution to organizational performance. In the conceptual framework, the four axes of marketing contributions to organizational performance are explained and the causal relationships between different research streams are explicated. According to the conceptual framework, marketing from shaping organizational culture to achieving value-based competitive advantage can play key roles in business performance.

### 7.3. Future Research

Future research can be done in different areas. The most important suggestion for future research is to conduct empirical research on the conceptual framework. However, given the multiplicity of constructs in the framework, it is suggested that research focuses on some specific parts of relationships within the conceptual framework. Understanding how marketing can create competitive advantage by engaging in key business processes, for example, requires further elaboration. Since the constructs within the framework are very complex and difficult to measure, it is recommended to conduct qualitative research in this area. Another area of research suggested in this study is the addition of the sales department to the field of marketing contribution to the organizational performance. As many researchers have pointed out, marketing activities are much broader than those traditionally performed by marketing units in companies (Homburg *et al.*, 2017; Webster Jr *et al.*, 2012). Research shows that the sales department plays key roles in many marketing activities (Homburg *et al.*, 2014a). It is suggested for future research that the marketing contribution to firm performance focuses on the distinctive contributions of sales and marketing departments.

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