



# Human resource systems as antecedents of hotel industry market orientation: An empirical study in the Canary Islands, Spain<sup>☆</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper studies how the different dimensions determining the human resource management system (recruiting, training, evaluation and compensation) influence the market orientation of hotels. There is also an exploratory analysis of the differences in the human resource management systems according to the following hotel classification data: star rating, size, ownership, time-share offer, type of location, customer satisfaction and profitability.

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## 1. Introduction

Research into market orientation has basically been conducted in consumer goods and industrial markets, with few works in service markets and, as far as we know, none in the area of tourism marketing. This lack of research studies in service markets contrasts with the evident importance of market orientation in these markets and the importance of the

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service sector to the economy in terms of gross domestic product. In this respect, Grönroos (1994) argues that traditional marketing management in the service sector must be substituted by market oriented management.

Many markets for services, including the tourism market, achieve success by coordinating their marketing functions with the other functions. They stress a culture of customer service with the design of performance policies and measures that are sensitive to customer needs; they also consider information about the customer a key asset and possess a “strategic vision of service” based on market segmentation, identification of the target group and the satisfaction of specific needs. Those business practices reflect the importance of market orientation in the service sector.

According to Harris and Ogbonna (2001), many theorists and practitioners persist in noting that further research is required to explore the barriers and processes of market orientation development and they note the relative dearth of research into such antecedents. In recent decades, researchers have studied several antecedents of market orientation in order to have a better understanding of its role in organizations.

A business is market orientated only when the entire organization embraces the values implicit therein and when all business processes are directed at creating superior customer value (Slater, 2001). This idea is of greater importance in service companies, where human resource practices have a greater influence on market orientation than in manufacturing firms because of the greater dependence on person-to-person interactions that are predominant in the service sector (Singh, 2000; McNaughton et al., 2002). According to Mavondo et al. (2005), investment in HR practices impacts on the processes of creating customer value; through the attraction, selection and retention of high quality employees, providing appropriate skills. In that respect, Mavondo et al. (2005) indicate that marketing research must consider incorporating human resource practices in models of market orientation as this provides a holistic presentation and adds realism to such models.

Both market orientation and human resource practices favor the processes of creation of value to the customer. However, Mavondo et al. (2005) state that, in the academic literature both research streams have been developed along parallel trajectories despite the recognition of linkages in these areas. Therefore, this work aims to contribute an integrated vision of both streams research.

Moreover, it is important to study how the antecedents of market orientation influence different sectors of activity. In that respect, Kirca et al. (2005) demonstrate that the extant literature needs a better understanding of how the impact of the antecedents of market orientation varies in different business and cultural contexts. Thus, further research should identify profiles of best practices to implement market orientation in different cultural contexts.

This study is justified by the absence of research in the tourism sector and the importance of studying the interrelations between market orientation and human resources in service companies. In that respect, this research work seeks to study the extent to which human resource management is an antecedent of market orientation in the hotel sector. More specifically, this work aims to identify the influence that the policies for recruiting, training, evaluation, career development and compensation issues exercise on the different dimensions of market orientation.

## 2. Literature review

The marketing literature has addressed the concept of market orientation from various perspectives. Authors have proposed many classifications that integrate the different

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