Market Orientation and Hotel Industry: Developing a Measurement Model

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Abstract. This study seeks to fill a gap in market orientation literature about the hotel industry and deals with the construction of a market orientation scale tailored based on a sample obtained from the hotel industry in a multicultural context. The proposed model has three dimensions: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and coordinated response to the client, competition and market structure domains. Research results indicate that the scale has good psychometric indicators. Content validity was assessed by questioning a group of marketing experts across Western Europe. Working data indicates that the proposed model holds convergent and discriminant validity as well reliability.

Keywords: Key words: Hotel industry; market orientation; scale construction

1   Introduction

Market orientation theoretical background, despite early developments in the 1950s, was developed in the 1990s. Narver and Slater [1] and Kohli and Jaworski [2] established the foundations for the following research on this issue. During the 1990s, several contributions were made that shaped the present state of market orientation study [1–6]. Although, despite the extensive work established during this period, subsequent developments were based mainly on the Kohli and Jaworski [2] and Narver and Slater [1] research.

Notwithstanding the fast development in market orientation study in the 1990s, the advent of the 2000s brought a substantial increasing of published research on market orientation [7].

On the other hand, market orientation research focused mainly on its relationship with business performance. Several studies focused on market orientation literature analysis, concluded a positive effect of market orientation in business performance [7–12]. Similarly, empirical research on this issue have had the same conclusion [13–16].

Regardless of the extensive literature developed during the 1990s and early 2000s, market orientation research on services sector, particularly empirical research about service provider companies as hotels and other leisure providers, were scarce, implying that the market orientation knowledge on the service sector was developed based on literature produced in the manufacturing sector [17]. Research on this subject about the services sector mainly focused on healthcare providers, insurance companies, banks, finance services, and nonprofit organizations [18].

Recent years carried out an additional amount of market orientation research on hotel sector companies, although few theoretical contributions were made to develop the market orientation construct or to adapt it to the hotel firms. In fact, despite these contributions, empirical research on this subject still use mainly the MARKOR and MKTOR scales. Furthermore, despite some advances made in adapting these models to hotels sector companies [13, 19, 20], no major theoretical developments were made, using data from the hotel industry.

Typically, empirical studies on market orientation in hotel industry uses the MARKOR scale [1] or the MKTOR scale [4], or some kind of adaptation. Despite the high acceptance of these models, several criticism to its psychometrics characteristics, namely to validity and reliability issues were highlighted. On the other hand, using these models to assess market orientation raises the same doubts of the underling models, and to construct new measurement models by synthetizing existent measures of the same construct is to avoid without reference to appropriate theory and conceptualization [21].

Furthermore, despite several studies conducted in recent years about market orientation in the hotel industry, in general, empirical research was based in a country or a country region context [14, 19, 20, 22, 23]. In fact, literature analysis suggests that studies, with an international scope, about market orientation in the hotel sector companies, are scarce.

Accordingly, this work seeks to contribute to the development of market orientation literature in hotel industry companies. The authors develop a market orientation measurement scale, tailored using a sample obtained from hospitality sector firms. Working data were obtained from an international context. Particularly, a sample of hotels from Western Europe was used (France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom).

This paper seeks to develop, considering the specificities of the existing market orientation measurement models, a valid and reliable scale, suitable for the hotel industry sector, developed based using a sample gathered in an international context.

2 Literature review

2.1 Measuring market orientation

Two main proposals were made in developing market orientation definition. Market orientation as the "organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for creating superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance" [1], and the "organizationwide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of intelligence across departments, and a organizationwide responsiveness to it" [2].

These definitions settled the foundations of the past quarter century of market orientation research. Accordingly, market orientation was seen as part of one of two approaches [24], a cultural approach [1, 6] and a management approach [2, 5, 25]. Notwithstanding these different approaches, literature on this subject mainly focused on the relationship between market orientation and business performance. Furthermore, empirical research provided strong evidences of a positive effect between the former and the last one [3, 7, 13, 14, 26–36], emphasizing the importance of market orientation in companies.

Moreover, empirical research on market orientation, despite wide, mainly uses Jaworski and Kohli [3] scale, or its reduced version, MARKOR scale [4] and the MKTOR scale [1]. Nevertheless, several original measurement scales [5, 6, 37] were developed, although without any particular acceptance among researchers. MARKOR and MKTOR scales are, even nowadays, the most used models, and subsequent developed models were mostly based on them.

Notwithstanding the importance of these measurement models, MARKOR and MKTOR scales present several problems and raised some criticisms about its validity and reliability [21, 38–41]. On the other hand, the scales development context raised doubts about its generalization to other geographical and cultural contexts. For instance, the relationship between market orientation and business performance presents slightly different results, by context [8, 10, 12, 42] or according the used scale [9, 12, 42, 43].

Results achieved when using MARKOR and MKTOR scales have also suffered several criticisms, namely, the inconsistency of the relationship between market orientation and business performance. On the other hand, several problems regarding the MARKOR and MKTOR scales' psychometric characteristics where emphasized, namely the statistical validity and the doubts about its consistence with the theoretical definition. These models present several validity issues [21, 38], fit problems [41, 44] and a narrow conceptualization [40]. Furthermore, "new" market orientation models, that are no more than synthesizing existing measures of the same construct [21], are frequently found in literature and did not add much to the development of the subject.

Despite the criticisms, the main question about this issue is related with the accuracy of market orientation measurement. Currently, empirical research on market orientation uses the existing market orientation measurement models, mainly MARKOR and MKTOR models, or adaptations based on them. Likewise, the same MARKOR and MKTOR dimensions and thus the same structures are used by researchers even when developing new scales, putting at the center of the process a certain level of intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and response to the information, about costumers, competition and interfunctional coordination.

2.2 Market orientation and the hotel industry

The hospitality sector has been overlooked in the development of existing market orientation measurement models. In general, the scales used to measure this matter in the hotel industry are based in preexistent models, namely the MARKOR scale [19, 45, 46] and MKTOR scale [14, 20, 22, 30, 47], or adaptations. Only recently some proposals were settled to improve and adapt these models to the hotel industry [19, 20].

Similarly, only recently have market orientation research on the hospitality sector been was published more frequently [14, 19, 20, 22, 30, 45–49], although, empirical research with an international scope is scarce. It is hard to find market orientation research about the hotel industry using a sample gathered in an international context. A search using Google Scholar search engine retrieved only the Au and Tse [50] and Zhou et al. [47] studies using samples gathered in several cultural contexts.

Market orientation should produce a positive effect on hotels business performance. Furthermore, hotel managers and owners, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise, must put clients' interest first [17], and client orientation, as part of a market-orientated company, seems to perform a dominant role in obtaining a competitive advantage in service sector [47].

On the other hand, empirical research on the relationship between market orientation and business performance, notwithstanding some inconsistent results [23, 50], states a positive relation between market orientation and business performance [19, 20, 22, 30, 45, 48, 51], reflecting a certain unanimity about it.

Furthermore, market orientation, if implemented, enables value creation for costumers and a continuous business performance improvement [1], and allows a unifying objective to individuals and departments, conducing to a superior business performance. It also produces in the workforce a sense of belonging to the organization, in which the central goal is to satisfy the customer, conducing to a compromise with the efforts of clients' satisfaction [2], and consequently improving business performance.

3 Methodology

3.1 Item generation and content validity

Churchill [52], Webb [53] and Nunnaly and Bernstein [54] recommendations were followed in order to develop the proposed scale.

First, a qualitative step was conducted. A strong analysis to the existent market orientation literature was done and a special focus in the service sector and the hotel industry market orientation research was given.

Literature analysis enabled to specify the construct domain [52]. Several market orientation measurement models were analyzed, original scales, or adaptations of existing scales. Its construction process was evaluated and an item by item analysis was conducted.

This procedure enabled to identify the proposed scale dimensions and its measurement indicators.

As for the proposed scale dimensionality, there is a certain unanimity among researchers about the multidimensionality of the market orientation construct [1, 2, 5, 20, 55–59]. Consequently, based on the literature analysis, it was proposed market orientation as a multidimensional construct with three dimensions: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and coordinated response to market information. These dimensions should measure three domains: client domain, competition domain and market structure domain.

On the other hand, the authors identified on the literature two forms of indicators: action indicators, as frequency, quickness, and use, and position indicators as level, commitment, and existence.

Therefore, a set of twenty-one items were developed to measure the frequency, quickness, use, level, commitment, and existence of intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and coordinated response about client, competition and market structure domains.

Following, content validity was tested. According Nunnaly and Bernstein [54], content validity analysis is essentially a subjective process and largely based upon opinions of various users. Therefore, the proposed scale was sent to a set of experts in marketing. Experts were PhD holders in the field of marketing, selected from universities from Western Europe countries, and were asked to evaluate the model items.

Furthermore, experts were asked to make a positive or negative judgement about the items' structure and the linkage between the items and the dimensions (intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and coordinated response). If a negative judgement were produced, experts were asked to specify and give insights about how to improve the model items and dimensions.

Based on the experts feedback a minor change was made in one item. As for the remaining twenty items and the proposed scaled dimensions, the experts' answers revealed unanimity in supporting them.

Therefore, the proposed model was based on twenty-one items, with three dimensions of intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and coordinated response, each one with seven items, according the proposed theoretical model and the content validity test.

The market orientation proposed model is described in Appendix 1.

3.2 Questionnaire and data

Data used in this research were collected using an online survey sent to the managers of 32377 hotels around Western European countries.

The statistical population was composed by the set of hotel companies from, France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Hotel companies were defined as tourist accommodation establishments. A local kind-of-activity unit providing a paid service (although the price might be partially or fully subsidised) short-term or short-stay accommodation services [60].

Hotel contacts were obtained in government tourism departments and yellow pages' services around the study context.

A total of 447 valid surveys were obtained, among them, 21 (4.7%) were one star hotels, 70 (15.66%) were two star hotels, 162 (36.24%) were three star hotels, 159 (35.57%) were four star hotels, and 35 (7.83%) were five star hotels.

Concerning the industrial structure, 79 (17.67%) hotels were part of a hotel chain and 368 (82.33%) were independent hotels.

Data collection was performed between October 2013 and January 2014. The questionnaire was part of a wider study on market orientation and business performance relation, and was divided in three parts, each related with the market orientation proposed dimensions.

All valid questionnaires were answered by the hotels' directors, marketing department directors or direction assistants.

4 Results

Data analysis was conducted in three steps. First, a scale purification was performed. Next, in order to test whether data fit the hypothesized theoretical model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted. Finally, convergent validity, discriminant validity and reliability were evaluated.

4.1 Measurement model purification

Market orientation construct was defined as a second order construct with three dimensions, intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and coordinated response. Therefore, to conduct a confirmatory analysis, data were computed in IBM SPSS Amos 24.

Conducting a factor analysis during the early stages of developing measurement models could produce many more dimensions than those conceptually identified [52]. Therefore, prior to the CFA analysis, items correlations to underlying constructs were evaluated, in order to purify the measurement model.

An item to construct correlations of 0.30 to 0.40 are the minimum acceptable, although values above 0.50 are a requirement. Statistical significance depends of the sample size. For instance, a correlation of 0.30 needs a minimum of 350 valid questionnaires [61]. Although, a correlation below 0.55 indicates that the variable shares little in common with the other measurements, that is of questionable value in defining the component [62]. Thus, during the purification process, a decision was made to raise the threshold level, and variables with correlation less than 0.60 were removed from the model.

Computed data were evaluated and, in this preliminar stage, five variables were removed from the model. Three variables were removed from intelligence generation construct, MODDI1 (0.54), MODGI3 (0.56) and MODGI7 (0.47), and two withdrawn from coordinated response construct, MODRpC1 (0.55) and MODRpC3 (0.18).

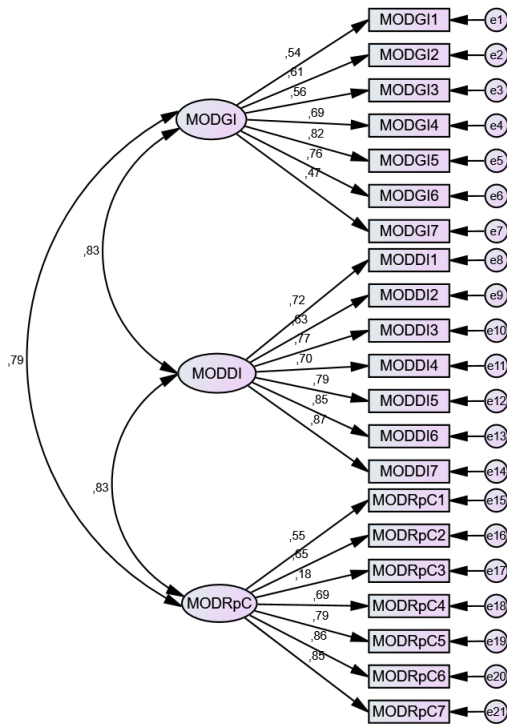Finished the purification process, the model fit was evaluated.

Fig. 2. Second tier measurement model

4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

A multivariate normality test was conducted. Figure 3 summarizes data skewness, kurtosis and critical values.

Variable	skew	c.r.	kurtosis	c.r.
MODGI2	-0,643	-5,551	-0,802	-3,46
MODGI4	-1,206	-10,411	0,794	3,428
MODGI5	-0,925	-7,98	0,149	0,643
MODGI6	-0,901	-7,78	0,005	0,02
MODDI1	-0,716	-6,181	-0,701	-3,025
MODDI2	-0,267	-2,304	-1,36	-5,868
MODDI3	-0,872	-7,53	-0,432	-1,862
MODDI4	-0,039	-0,338	-1,269	-5,474
MODDI5	-0,705	-6,087	-0,584	-2,521
MODDI6	-0,569	-4,907	-0,775	-3,347
MODDI7	-0,668	-5,768	-0,671	-2,896
MODRpC2	-1,488	-12,841	1,704	7,356
MODRpC4	-0,346	-2,987	-0,91	-3,926
MODRpC5	-0,346	-2,985	-0,61	-2,631
MODRpC6	-0,452	-3,9	-0,635	-2,741
MODRpC7	-0,539	-4,653	-0,496	-2,142
Multivariate			96,813	42,643

Fig. 3. Multivariate normality test

According to the multivariate normality test conducted, data did not follow a normal multivariate distribution. In order to work around this issue, a 2000 resampling bootstrap procedure was computed [63].

Data from confirmatory factor analysis were evaluated (figure 4 – model 1). Results were modest, thus, once the model was previously purified, modification indices were analysed.

	x^2	df	p	x^2/df	CFI	GFI	NFI	PGFI	PNFI	PCFI	RMSEA
Model 1	491.345	101	0	4.865	0.92	0.86	0.90	0.64	0.75	0.77	0.09
Model 2	403.012	99	0	4.071	0,93	0.89	0.91	0.65	0.75	0.77	0,08

Fig. 4. Model fit indicators

Modification indices revealed an obvious relation between variables MODGI4 and MODGI6, and variables MODRpC4 and MODRpC5. Thus, a second model (model 2) was constructed, and errors from variables MODGI4 and MODGI6, and from variables MODRpC4 and MODRpC5 were correlated, and the second fit values were evaluated (figure 4).

Global fit indices of both models (figure 4) confirm that the second model presents a better fit, furthermore parsimonious are better than the original model. Moreover, scale content validity is assured once it maintains sixteen of the twenty-one original scale variables.

4.3   Convergent validity, discriminate validity and reliability

Average variance extracted (AVE) values were evaluated to assess convergent validity. Convergent validity is achieved if AVE values are above 0.50 [64]. Extracted AVE values indicates convergent validity, MODGI = 0.543, MODDI = 0.583, and MODRpC = 0.583.

As for reliability, extracted data presented values above the 0.70 recommended value. Composite reliability were MODGI = 0.824, MODDI=0.906, and MODRpC = 0.873.

Finally, in order to assess discriminant validity, a chi-square difference test was computed. Three models were constructed, each one with two model's constructs. MODGI <-> MODDI, MODGI <-> MODRpC and MODDI <-> MODRpC. Then, each one of these models were computed correlating freely and constraining correlation between the two constructs to 0. According Segars [65], if the chi-square difference is significant, it confirms discriminant validity. According extracted data from the chi-square difference, discriminant validity was confirmed.

Figure 5 describes the market orientation scale after purification and model fit.

Intelligence generation (AVE = 0.543; Composite reliability = 0.824)	
MODGI2	We track our competitors activities and offers at least two times a year.
MODGI4	Our company is fully committed, when dealing with customers, in gathering information about their desires and needs, even if they didn't recognize them yet.
MODGI5	Our company seeks to obtain quickly market information that could change clients' perceptions about our products and services.
MODGI6	Our company seeks to know quickly our competitor's new products and services, each time they bring them to the market.
Intelligence dissemination (AVE = 0.583; Composite reliability = 0.906)	
MODDI1	Customer information is quickly disseminated to all firm's departments.
MODDI2	In our company we have a formal information dissemination procedure, among all firm's departments, about our clients.
MODDI3	If a firm's department gets key intelligence about our clients, it spreads the information quickly to all the other departments.
MODDI4	Our company usually organizes formal meetings targeted to discuss our competitors activities and offers.
MODDI5	Information about our competitors advantages known by one of this firm departments is quickly spread to all the other departments.
MODDI6	This firm's departments are fully committed in sharing information about market information and trends affecting our business.
MODDI7	Information about market structure changes (trends, regulation, etc.), obtained by one of our firm's departments, spreads quickly to all the other departments.
Coordinated response (AVE = 0.583; Composite reliability = 0.873)	
MODRpC2	When it is need to act targeted to clients needs, all departments in our company participate.
MODRpC4	We always respond to competitive activities from our competitors.
MODRpC5	Competitive actions from our competitors have a quick coordinated response from our company.
MODRpC6	All this company departments respond quickly to changes in market structure (trends, regulations, etc.)
MODRpC7	Response to market changes is done in a coordinated way by all this firm's departments.

Figure 5 – Market orientation scale after purification process

5 Conclusions, implications and limitations

5.1 Conclusions

This study sought to develop a valid and reliable market orientation measurement scale based on a sample from the hotel industry obtained in an international context. Conversely, previous studies on this subject were based on adapting earlier developed models, MKTOR [20, 30, 47] and MARKOR [13, 19, 45, 46]. Consequently, some innovation was brought out, contributing to develop market orientation study in services sector and particularly in hotel industry.

The developed market orientation scale was based on three dimensions, intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and coordinated response, related with three domains: client, competition and market structure. Despite similarities with former studies, it is widely accepted that market orientation construct is composed of some degree of intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and a response (coordinated) about domains of client, competition and market structure. On the other hand, a main contribution arising from this study was accomplished by identifying a set of measurement indicators: action indicators, as frequency, quickness, and use; and position indicators as level, commitment, and existence.

Therefore, this study also makes some theoretical contributions. A qualitative literature analysis was conducted to study and identify the theoretical background of the proposed market orientation scale. An extensive market orientation literature analysis was done and a set of previous market orientation scales were evaluated as well as their construction process. In order to validate scale content validity, items and dimensionality, a survey was sent to a group of marketing experts in the analyzed context, asking whether the proposed scale fills the underlying market orientation measurement construct.

Furthermore, an empirical analysis was conducted using a sample obtained from hotels from Western Europe. Firstly, the proposed market orientation scale suffered a purification process, during which five items were removed from de model once the correlation with underlying construct was below 0.60 threshold defined.

Next, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out. Fit measures were evaluated, although evidence of interrelations between variables led to a second model construction. The second model presented a better fit and better parsimony indicators, implying that the model dimensionality should incorporate these changes.

Moreover, market orientation scale validity and reliability were tested. Results confirm that the proposed scale presents convergent and discriminant validity. Composite reliability results, above the threshold of 0.70 [66], indicate that the scale is reliable.

Thus, this study proposed a market orientation measurement scale, developed based on a sample of hotel sector companies. The performed research found a scale able to obtain good psychometric indicators in a multicultural context. Particularly in a context that accounts in a large amount to the international tourism.

5.2   Implications, limitations and further research

From a theoretical perspective, it is believed that this research contributes in taking a step forward in the study of market orientation in service sector and hospitality industry. The proposed scale implies two main developments related with two problems facing the study of market orientation in the hotel industry. Firstly, the developed scale was built based solely on taking a sample from the hotel sector's companies in account, thus the results from this study are not biased by factors that are external to the hotel industry. Moreover, the scale was developed based in the international context, culturally somehow far from the MAKROR and MKTOR developing context. Thus, this model should be considered in measuring market orientation in multicultural contexts. A substantial part of hotels in Europe are small companies with less than 10 employees [67] . Increasing and maintaining a certain degree of market orientation is a complex process that requires considerable expenditure of money and time [68]. On the other hand, having market orientation requires a commitment of resources and is only useful if the benefits it affords exceeds the cost of those resources [2]. Therefore, from a managerial perspective this model implies a step forward in making hotels adopt a certain degree of market orientation and continuously assess it.

On the other hand, theoretical background and empirical research on market orientation states a positive relationship between market orientation and business performance. However, the existent measurement models present validity and reliability issues and were developed based in an economic sector and a context other than the hospitality sector and the European context. Therefore, by fostering the study of market orientation in the hotel industry and proposing a measuring model suitable, hotel manging have at disposal a tool to assess and develop a market-oriented company. Furthermore, the international scope of this study should give a strong support for hotel managers in order to evolve market orientation.

From an empirical perspective it is believed that the proposed model has a major implication on market orientation research in hotel industry sector. Considering the international character of this study, the scale should be able to produce valid and reliable results across different contexts.

This work deals with several important questions related to market orientation study in the hotel industry. Despite the enlightenment brought to the subject, it carries a number of limitations that suggest the need for further research. Firstly, this work main objective was to develop a measurement scale adapted to the hotel industry. Most the literature on this subject seeks to assess the relationship between market orientation and business performance. The aim of this study was not to study this relation, conversely, this work sought to develop a tool able to better study this relation. Thus, future work on this issue should seriously consider using the developed scale in order to evaluate market orientation and its relationship with business performance.

Furthermore, the context in study is quite large. Not only do the countries that are part of the sample have a large contribution in Europe and World tourism, but the number of accommodation establishments in the context is large. Accessing for the respondent is not an easy task, although, decisions made led researchers to find that the best methodology to deal with this issue was the online survey, with all the intrinsic cons, namely the low response rate.

Further research should consider using the developed market orientation scale and test its relationship with business performance. Additionally, it would be interesting to evaluate the measurement constructs and test their validity and reliability country by country. Moreover, the scale should be evaluated in a context out of Europe. Proposed scale skills need to be assessed in culturally distant contexts in order to fully assess their features.

Additionally, research should be conducted in order to compare the scale with previous developed models, namely MARKOR and MKTOR scales, or adaptations.

Appendix 1 – Market orientation proposed scale

Intelligence generation	
MODGI1	We poll our clients to assess our products and services quality.
MODGI2	We track our competitors activities and offers at least two times a year.
MODGI3	We have a gathering information informal procedure (ex: diners, informal meetings, etc.) about market developments and trends (ex: market structure, etc.)
MODGI4	Our company is fully committed, when dealing with customers, in gathering information about their desires and needs, even if they didn't recognize them yet.
MODGI5	Our company seeks to obtain quickly market information that could change clients' perceptions about our products and services.
MODGI6	Our company seeks to know quickly our competitor's new products and services, each time they bring them to the market.
MODGI7	People in this firm, other than sales people, obtain informal information about our competitors.
Intelligence dissemination	
MODDI1	Customer information is quickly disseminated to all firm's departments.
MODDI2	In our company we have a formal information dissemination procedure, among all firm's departments, about our clients.
MODDI3	If a firm's department gets key intelligence about our clients, it spreads the information quickly to all the other departments.
MODDI4	Our company usually organizes formal meetings targeted to discuss our competitors activities and offers.
MODDI5	Information about our competitors advantages known by one of this firm departments is quickly spread to all the other departments.
MODDI6	This firm's departments are fully committed in sharing information about market information and trends affecting our business.
MODDI7	Information about market structure changes (trends, regulation, etc.), obtained by one of our firm's departments, spreads quickly to all the other departments.
Coordinated response	
MODRpC1	All our company departments are fully committed to respond our clients' needs and desires.
MODRpC2	When it is need to act targeted to clients needs, all departments in our company participate.
MODRpC3	Some of this company's departments take more time than it should to respond to our clients' needs and desires.
MODRpC4	We always respond to competitive activities from our competitors.
MODRpC5	Competitive actions from our competitors have a quick coordinated response from our company.
MODRpC6	All this company departments respond quickly to changes in market structure (trends, regulations, etc.)
MODRpC7	Response to market changes is done in a coordinated way by all this firm's departments.

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