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**AN EMPRICAL RESEARCH IN FIG FIRMS
OPERATING IN AYDIN FOR THE IMPORTANCE AND
THE APPLICATIONS OF MODERN CUSTOMER-
ORIENTED MARKETING**

**AYDIN İLİNDE FAALİYET GÖSTEREN İNCİR
İŞLETMELERİNDE MODERN TÜKETİCİ ODAKLI
PAZARLAMANIN ÖNEM VE UYGULAMALARI
ÜZERİNE AMPİRİK BİR ÇALIŞMA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper concentrates upon the key role of modern customer-oriented marketing in the succes of today's firms. The objective of this study is to investigate what degree fig firms are conscious of modern customer-oriented marketing and how successsfully they carry out the requirements (basic principles) of this modern marketing approach. Furthermore, to investigate whether any difference exists between the firms exporting fig abroad and those selling fig for domestic markets in relation to their modern marketing views and applications is one of the main priorities of this research.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma modern müşteri odaklı pazarlamanın günümüz işletmelerinin başarısındaki kilit rolünü konu edinmektedir. Çalışma, Aydın ilinde faaliyet göstermekte olan incir işletmelerinin ne derece müşteri odaklı pazarlamanın bilincinde oldukları ile bu pazarlama yaklaşımının temel ilkelerini uygulamadaki başarılarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca ihracat yapan incir işletmeleri ile sadece yurtiçine yönelik çalışan incir işletmeleri arasında modern pazarlama anlayışı ve uygulamaları açısından bir fark olup olmadığının belirlenmesi de bu çalışmanın ana önceliklerinden bir tanesidir.

Fig firms, customer-oriented marketing, product-oriented marketing.
İncir işletmesi, müşteri-odaklı pazarlama, ürün-odaklı pazarlama.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article will report the results of empirical work carried out in firms, established in Aydın, selling fig abroad or marketing in national borders. Because of Turkey's leader position in the world market of fig product, we think that this research has an exceptional meaning and importance. Only the fact that almost all fig production of the world is realized in Turkey, especially in Aydın (90% of national yearly production) will be an adequate means or a basic criterion to demonstrate the critical reasons and encouraging elements hidden behind this empirical research. So that marketing perspectives, approaches to modern marketing perspective and the positions of fig firms in the modern marketing process are essential subjects to analyze to hold and strengthen the leader rank of Turkey in fig market. Moreover one of the main objectives of this study is to analyze whether or not any differences exist between the fig firms selling abroad and those not regarding their marketing perspectives and activities. In short we believe that this research might be a potential guide or a source for fig firms to renew and improve themselves in the direction of modern marketing perspective.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MODERN CUSTOMER-ORIENTED MARKETING

We see that a product-oriented approach dominated in all firms until 1950s. In this old-fashioned approach, engineers develop a product that they think is attractive and the job of marketing people is then to sell the product that company manufactures. But today such an approach, summarized with a phrase "I can sell whatever I produce", rarely works. Why should it? The engineers have not analysed the market; they do not know what customers want or what competitors are offering. The consequences are that the sales people often do not believe in the product and the customers do not see any new value in it. So that firms had to abandon this approach aiming at maximum sales and profit at first due to changes in market conditions and competition in the late 1950s. And now a modern customer-oriented approach operates in firms and guides all managers. This new approach centres around customers' satisfaction. In other words, customer needs and wants replace the firm sales and profit priority of old one in this new approach. Firms believe that customers do not want products, they want solutions which offer new and superior benefits. Thus, the central task of management is understanding the value needs of customers and finding better ways of meeting these needs.¹ This modern, customer-oriented approach

¹ Peter DOYLE, **Marketing Management and Strategy**, 2nd Edition, Prentice Hall Europe (London: 1998), p. 420-421; Roger BENNETT and Adrian SARGEANT, "The Nonprofit Marketing Landscape: Guest Editors' Introduction to a Special Section", **Journal of Business Research**, Vol. 58 (2005), p. 799-802; J. GOEBEL, Marshall. W., DANIEL, Greg and Locander B., William, "An Organizational Communication-Based Model of Individual Customer Orientation of Nonmarketing Members of a Firm", **Journal of Strategic Marketing**, Vol. 12 (2004), p. 29-32.

differentiates from the old one with its priorities, understanding and aims, such as;

Success Depends on The Whole/Not Only Marketing Department or Sales Power: The marketing department has a role to play in helping create value, but is no more central than R&D, production, finance or personnel. The marketing specialist may take the lead in researching the customer and developing sales strategies, but the other functions play key roles in innovation, product development, quality and responsiveness. Marketing concept is the integrative outlook which should bind the separate activities together. Marketing is essentially a team effort and its accomplishment needs to be organized to reflect this fact.²

Knowledge and an Effective Information System: Today all firms know that knowledge is a strategic power and a cornerstone of creating competitive advantage. And also they know that the main source of knowledge is market, explicitly customers. It means that watching out the market firmly and responding to changes in customers needs and wants is inevitable for today's firms.³ On the other hand it means that firms will need an effective information system to gather knowledge about markets. Because they believe that the success of all activities besides marketing of the firms depends on the knowledge gotten from markets.⁴ In short, success will not be possible unless predicting the changes outside and creating a market-based learning organization, in which all members work as a learning agent of a team.⁵

Strategic Vision and Management: An outstanding feature of modern marketing is that organizations have a long-range view and be able to evaluate all things strategically. This long-range view combining the term *market* with "strategic management" in a phrase emphasizes that strategy development needs to be driven by the market and its environment rather than by an internal orientation. It also points out that the process should be proactive rather than reactive and that the task should be to try to influence the environment as well as respond to it.⁶

A Qualified Staff: Success is only possible by having well-informed, qualified and hard-working employees acting decisively in the direction of firm goals. Although the concepts such as technology, equipment, market,

² Peter DOYLE, p. 421.

³ David BEARD, "Learning to Change Organizations", **Personnel Management**, Vol. 25 , No. 1 (1993), s. 32-35.

⁴ Ian WILKINSON and Louise YOUNG, "Marketing Theory in The Next Millennium: Looking Backwards and Forwards" **Journal of Business Research**, Vol. 55 (2002), p. 83; Resul USTA, "Türkiye'nin Fındık İhracatında Pazar ve Mamul Geliştirmede Çağdaş Pazarlama Anlayışının Yerleştirilmesi", **Pazarlama Dünyası**, Y. 15, S. 5 (2001), p. 53.

⁵ J. SINKULA, W. BAKER and T. NOORDEWIERT, "A Framework for Market-Based Learning: Linking Values, Knowledge, and Behavior", **Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science**, Vol. 25, No. 4, (1997), p. 308; Peter SENGE, "Mental Models", **Planning Review**, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1992), p. 4-10.

⁶ David A. AAKER, **Strategic Market Management**, 5th Edition, John Wiley&Sons Inc. (New York: 1998), p. 12.

demand and strategy are very important for firm success and future, the key element to combine all of those in the direction of firm goals is human resources. So that this reality directs firms to compete in employing skillful, creative, well-informed, competent and forceful persons besides to help their employees improve their skills and knowledge. In conclusion a qualified staff is always the most important source of modern marketing to get power to reach its aim.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Aim

The aim of this descriptive-correlational study was to investigate what degree fig firms executes the requirements (four principles) of modern marketing and try to determine whether any difference exists between the exporting firms and the others which market only in national borders.

3.2. Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference between the managers of fig exporting firms and those of not exporting ones regarding their modern customer-oriented marketing approach and applications.

Sub-hypotheses of H1;

H1a: There is a significant difference between the managers of fig exporting firms and those of not exporting ones regarding that marketing success of a firm depends on the whole's effort.

H1b: There is a significant difference between the managers of fig exporting firms and those of not exporting ones regarding that they have an effective information system to communicate directly with customers and collect data about markets.

H1c: There is a significant difference between the managers of fig exporting firms and those of not exporting ones regarding that they have a strategic vision and a long-range planning in relation to their marketing activities.

H1d: There is a significant difference between the managers of fig exporting firms and those of not exporting ones regarding that they have a qualified marketing personnel.

3.3. Methods

Sample

The study population consisted of all fig firms operating in towns of Aydın, namely Nazilli, Sultanhisar, Köşk, İncirliova, Germencik and Ortaklar. In other words, Nazilli-Ortaklar district was determined as our research field because of its huge capacity in Turkey's fig production. After determining the names and addresses of the fig firms operating in this district with an assistance given by Aydın and Nazilli Chambers of Commerce, we

handed questionnaires to marketing managers (or top managers)* and also we tried to make an interview with them. Unfortunately most of these managers refused to make an interview and respond to our questionnaire with a reason that they were too busy or they did not want to disclose the firm secrets. Although this rigid and reticent attitude of managers caused participation level of our research to be low, the number of usable forms received from 40 top managers visited was 22, giving a response rate of 55%.

Instruments

The top managers of the firms were handed a three-part questionnaire designed for this study. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 4 items for demographic data (sex, age, education level and vocational experience). In the second part, there were 5 items prepared to gather data about firms (foundation date, employee number, product quantity sold in a year, market and the type of the firm). A 17-item, five-point Likert-type scale anchored by the terms “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5) was used to measure the firms’ modern marketing application in the last part of the questionnaire. These 17 items were gotten through a reliability analysis of 30 items which we prepared in the direction of the basic principles of modern marketing approach told above. At the end of reliability analysis, 13 items were eliminated from the questionnaire.

Statistical analysis

SPSS pc + version 11.0 was used for statistical analysis. A factor analysis “varimax rotation” was used to condense the number of items and focus on the underlying structures in the descriptive and inferential analyses. Differences in the responses between the groups were tested by the Independent Sample Test, the internal consistency was tested by Cronbach’s alpha, and the Pearson rank correlation coefficient was used to calculate the correlation between the factors (Kinnear and Taylor, 1991; 603-620). A *P*-value of <0.05 was regarded as significant.

Table 1: Respondents (Managers) Demographics

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)	Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Age</i>		
<i>Male</i>	20	90.9	<i>18-25</i>	2	9.1
<i>Female</i>	2	9.1	<i>26-35</i>	5	22.7
			<i>36-45</i>	8	36.4
			<i>46 and over</i>	7	31.8
<i>Vocational Experience</i>			<i>Education Level</i>		
<i>1-5 years</i>	3	13.6	<i>Elementary Educ.</i>	8	36.4
<i>6-10 years</i>	3	13.6	<i>High School</i>	8	36.4
<i>11-15 yaers</i>	4	18.2	<i>Vocational School</i>	1	4.5
<i>16-20 years</i>	4	18.2	<i>University</i>	5	22.7
<i>21 years and over</i>	8	36.4	<i>Master Degree</i>	-	-

* We see that top managers in many fig firms are responsible for marketing activities.

3.4. Results

Demographic Statistics for Respondents

Demographic findings for respondents (managers) are shown in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of respondents was male managers (90.9%), and only 9.1% of them was female. It means that marketing activities are heavily being directed by male managers in fig firms. And 36.4% of our respondents were in “middle-age” group (36-45), whereas only 9.1% were in “very young-age” group (18-25). On the other hand, the majority of respondents (36.4%) were very experienced in their work, but only 13.6% have been working in fig sector since the last five years. Also as presented in Table 1, the probability of a respondent having an elementary or a high school degree was 72.8%. In other words, 27.2 % of respondents graduated from a vocational school or a university.

Descriptive Statistics for Firms

Descriptive findings for firms in which respondents are employed as managers are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, 36.4% of the firms were established in a “limited company” form, whereas 22.7% were in “joint-stock” and 40.9% were in “one-person ownership” form. On the other hand, Table 2 presents that 27.3% of the firms employed no more than 10 persons. And also only 2 firms (9.1%) took part in the range of 151-200 for its employee number. As a result, we can conclude, from the employee number of the firms presented in Table 2, that all firms were small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Table 2: Descriptive Findings for Firms

Item	Frequency	Percent (%)	Item	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Firm Type</i>			<i>Employee Number</i>		
Limited	8	36.4	1-10	6	27.3
Joint-stock	5	22.7	11-50	8	36.4
Collective	-	-	51-100	1	4.5
Commandit	-	-	101-150	4	18.2
One-person ownership	9	40.9	151-200	2	9.1
			Missing	1	4.5
<i>Foundation Date</i>			<i>Market Structure</i>		
1970-1980	3	13.6	Foreign market	11	50.0
1981-1990	4	18.2	Domestic market	7	31.8
1991-2000	5	22.7	Both	3	13.6
2001 and later	7	31.9	Missing	1	4.5
Missing	3	13.6			
<i>Average quantity sold in a year (ton)</i>					
1-1500	15	68.2			
1501-3000	3	13.6			
3001-5000	1	4.5			
5001-10000	1	4.5			
Missing	2	9.1			

We see that there is an increasing balanced distribution in the foundation date ranges of the firms. For example, Table 2 shows that 3, 4, 5 and 7 firms were established sequentially in the ranges of 1970-1980, 1981-1990, 1991-2000 and 2001 and later. Moreover, Table 2 presents that 68.2% of the firms were marketing 1500 tons of fig or less in a year. And it is known from Table 2 that only 2 firms exceeded the range of 1501-2000 tons. Finally, Table 2 includes information about the market structure of the fig firms. As can be seen from this Table, while half of the firms were entirely marketing abroad, 7 (31.8%) firms worked for domestic market and only 3 firms (13.6%) produced for both markets.

Tablo 3. Factor Loadings and Reliability (Cronbach Alfa) Values of Research Variables

Items and Factor Groups	F1	F2	F3	F4	Alfa
Collective Effort in Marketing Success					0,8456
5	0,854				
8	0,810				
10	0,860				
Knowledge and Effective Information System					0,8280
16		0,788			
11		0,787			
12		0,776			
Strategic Vision and Management					0,9163
27			0,872		
30			0,854		
29			0,754		
28			0,703		
26			0,627		
A Qualified Staff					0,9160
25				0,880	
18				0,863	
24				0,838	
21				0,811	
22				0,796	
23				0,757	

Factor Loadings and Reliability Analysis

Factor loadings and reliability (Cronbach Alfa) values of items included in the questionnaire are presented in Table 3. As can be seen, items of the questionnaire were collected in four factor groups and some were eliminated from the questionnaire at the end of the factor analysis. Briefly, a factor analysis means identifying factors and the alpha coefficient indicates the consistency level of these factors. So that values presented in Table 3 show that our factor groups were rather reliable and consistent as factor loadings lower than 0,600 were deleted. For example, to get a higher alpha coefficient (0,8456) for the first factor group of “collective effort in

marketing success”, seven items (numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9) were deleted. Similarly 6 items (numbers 13, 14, 15, 17, 19 and 20) were deleted from the second factor group to get an alpha coefficient of 0,8280. Consequently alpha coefficients of the first two factor groups were over 0,800. On the other hand, the third and the fourth one had a higher coefficient value than those of the first two groups, explicitly 0,9163 and 0,9160.

Table 4: Group Statistics

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Modern Marketing	Not Exp. Firms	11	3,5242	,54581	,16457
	Exp. Firms	10	3,8183	,64234	,20313
	Total	21	3,6530	,58571	,12487
Collective Effort in Mark.	Not Exp. Firms	11	3,8788	,88535	,26694
	Exp. Firms	10	3,5333	1,05643	,33407
	Total	21	3,7121	,93885	,20016
Know. And Effec. Infor. System	Not Exp. Firms	11	3,7879	,71915	,21683
	Exp. Firms	10	3,900	,87560	,27689
	Total	21	3,8485	,76100	,16225
Strategic Vision and Management	Not Exp. Firms	11	3,2900	1,06922	,33812
	Exp. Firms	10	4,0400	,45019	,14236
	Total	21	3,6810	,86696	,18919
A Qualified Staff	Not Exp. Firms	11	3,1136	,87898	,26502
	Exp. Firms	10	3,8000	,71922	,22744
	Total	21	3,3750	,89522	,19086

Group Statistics and The Results of Hypothesis Test

Managers' views of modern marketing approach and applications in firms are shown in Table 4, and Table 5 presents the results of Independent Samples Test. Although managers of exporting firms scored higher than the managers of not exporting firms on all factors except for the factor “collective effort in marketing”, the results of Independent Samples Test showed that there was not a significant difference between these two groups in relation to modern marketing approach and its four subgroups at P-significance value of <0.05. Consequently all null hypotheses of our research were rejected according to the results of Independent Samples Test. In short, we had to reject H1 null hypothesis as p-value of “modern marketing approach” variable is greater than 0.05 ($t=-1.134$, $p=0.271>0.05$). In other words, the managers of exporting firms did not differ from the managers of not exporting ones on modern marketing approach and applications. Also Table 5 showed that managers all agreed that marketing success of a firm depended on the whole effort. So that H1a null hypothesis was rejected ($t=0,819$, $p=0.425>0,05$). Similarly managers all agreed that they had an effective information system to communicate directly with customers and collect data about markets in their firms as well as their strategic management and a qualified marketing personnel. As a result, the all sub-hypotheses of H1, namely null hypothesis H1b ($t=-0.322$, $p=0.751>0.05$), H1c ($t=-2.044$, $p=0.056>0.05$) and H1d ($t=-1.946$, $p=0.067>0.05$) were rejected.

Table 5: The Results of Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
<i>Modern Marketing</i>	Equal variances assumed	,209	,653	-1,134	19	,271	-,2941
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,125	17,793	,276	-,2941
Collective Effort in Mark	Equal variances assumed	,450	,510	,815	19	,425	,3455
	Equal variances not assumed			,808	17,676	,430	,3455
Know. And Effec. Infor. System	Equal variances assumed	1,365	,257	-,322	19	,751	-,1121
	Equal variances not assumed			-,319	17,500	,754	-,1121
Strategic Vision and Management	Equal variances assumed	6,107	,024	-2,044	18	,056	-,7500
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,044	12,094	,063	-,7500
A Qualified Staff	Equal variances assumed	,838	,372	-1,946	19	,067	-,6864
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,965	18,815	,064	-,6864

Table 6: Intercorrelations Among Research Variables

	Firm Type	Mark. Str.	Emp. Num.	Quantity sold	Found Date	Sex	Age	Exper.	Educ.	Coll. Eff.	Eff. Inf Sys.	Str. Vis.	A Qual. Staff	Mod. Mark. Appr.
<i>Firm Type</i>	1,00	-,596**	-,466*	-,306	,536*	-,024	,019	-,218	-,298	,304	,063	,125	,175	,251
<i>Mark Str.</i>	-,596**	1,00	,567**	,241	-,262*	-,053	,112	,261	,158	-,184	,006	,395	,204	,043
<i>Emp. Num.</i>	-,466*	,567**	1,00	,614**	-,337	,017	-,097	-,031	-,502*	-,182	,256	,431	,569**	,371
<i>Quantity Sold.</i>	-,306	,241	,614**	1,00	-,352	-,157	-,212	-,126	,206	-,250	,000	,117	,259	,035
<i>Found. Date</i>	,536*	-,262	-,337	-,352	1,00	,108	-,338	-,279	-,062	,481*	,312	,145	-,164	,315
<i>Sex</i>	,024	-,053	,017	-,167	-,108	1,00	-,136	-,220	,240	,214	-,219	-,146	,196	,037
<i>Age</i>	-,019	,112	-,097	-,212	-,338	-,136	1,00	,400	-,199	-,100	-,052	-,050	,151	,015
<i>Exp.</i>	-,009	,136	,245	-,138	-,154	,052	,236	1,00	,526**	,399*	,177	,439**	,368*	,263
<i>Educ.</i>	-,298	,158	-,502*	,206	-,062	,240	-,199	,526**	1,00	,139	,060	,276	,241	,266
<i>Coll. Effort</i>	,304	-,184	-,182	-,250	,481*	,214	-,100	,399*	,139	1,00	,454*	,094	,012	,587**
<i>Eff. Inf. Sys.</i>	,063	,006	,256	,000	,312	-,219	-,052	,177	,060	,454*	1,00	,418	,214	,740**
<i>Str. Vis.</i>	,125	,395	,431	,117	,145	-,146	-,050	,439**	,276	,094	,418	1,00	,572**	,752**
<i>A qual. Staff</i>	,175	,204	,569**	,259	-,164	,196	,151	,368*	,241	,012	,214	,572**	1,00	,661**
<i>Mod. Mark Appr.</i>	,251	,043	,371	,035	,315	,037	,015	,263	,266	,587**	,740**	,752**	,661**	1,00

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Intercorrelations Among Variables

Correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 6. As can be seen, modern marketing approach and its four basic principles (collective effort $r=0.587$, $p<0.01$; effective information system $r=0.740$, $p<0.01$; strategic management $r=0.752$, $p<0.01$ and a qualified staff $r=0.661$, $p<0.01$) were highly correlated, while qualified staff and strategic vision variables were highly intercorrelated ($r=0.572$, $p<0.01$). The correlation between the qualified staff and strategic vision variables can be evaluated that managers needed a qualified, well-informed marketing personnel to accomplish an effective strategic management for marketing activities of the firms. Or in an inverse expression, managers believed that it was possible to reach a success in strategic management only by successful marketing employees.

On the other hand, Table 6 presents interesting correlations among demographic variables. For example, there was a positive and strong correlation between the variables of experience and education level of managers ($r=0.526$, $p<0.01$). Therefore it means that the higher experienced the managers participated in our research as a respondent, the higher education level they had. Interestingly, both employee number ($r=-0.466$, $p<0.01$) and market structure ($r=-0.596$, $p<0.01$) were inversely related with firm type. In other words, all the firms exporting fig abroad were limited or joint-stock company whereas firms established in a one-person ownership form were operating for domestic markets and had a less employee number than that of others. But as can be seen from Table 6, both quantity sold in a year ($r=0.614$, $p<0.01$) and qualified staff ($r=0.569$, $p<0.01$) variables were positively correlated with employee number. It means that firms employed more people due to an increase in quantity sold in a year, whereas employee number was regarded as an indicator of a qualified staff by managers. Finally there was a positive correlation between firm type and foundation date variables ($r=0.536$, $p<0.01$) resulting from 42.1% of the firms were one-person ownership established after 1990.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the analysis above, we can conclude that managers of the fig firms are conscious of what modern marketing is and how it plays an important role in the future and success of today's firms. Managers think that their firms are not excellent but successful in carrying out the basic principles of modern customer-oriented marketing. The results of the study show that there is not a significant difference between the firms exporting fig and the others only marketing for domestic markets in relation to their modern marketing views and applications.

On the other hand the observations and interviews made with the managers have implications for fig firms. Fig firms, especially small-sized ones scattered in every towns and villages of Aydın, need to come together

urgently to form a more competitive and stronger unit such as Gülbirlik consisted of nearly forty thousand rose producers. This kind of a unit means a higher quality and an easier way to create a brand in fig production for both producers and country. We hope that this kind of a collaboration among fig producers will be more efficient than quota being applied by the government in fig export to secure quality in this product. Or the quota application for fig exporters will force small-sized enterprises to join in a unit. Consequently, in every circumstances combining the powers seem to be the best way for the small-sized fig firms operating in Aydın.

Finally it is very important to make future researches periodically in this area to draw a detailed picture of fig firms' problems in marketing, financing, etc. Such a research would be valuable to supply information for both decision makers of fig firms and governmental authorities, and all those providing support for fig firms.

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