

THE ROLE OF INTERPRETATION AND RECONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE ADOPTION OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS: THE CASES OF MARKET ORIENTATION AND CRM

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ABSTRACT

This interpretive study aims to understand the adoption of marketing knowledge, market orientation (MO) and customer relationship management (CRM) particularly. By means of a series of interviews with managers and employees of third-party logistics (TPL) service providers in Turkey, it has been found that practitioners interpret, reconstruct and reconfigure management knowledge in their own contexts. The adoption process may not be as apparent and straightforward as usually thought. Operational quality and goal relevance moderated the rate of adoption. Despite the small sample size as a major limitation, this study may form the basis for an expanded research effort that is international.

1. INTRODUCTION

The adoption as well as the development of new management theories and ideas, also called management fashions, has drawn considerable attention in related literatures. Following the seminal works of Abrahamson (1991, 1996), a "management fashion" literature has emerged and become a fashion in itself (Clark 2004). Although management fashion literature has shown that these new theories and ideas share some common characteristics- such as being represented by their supporters as innovative and promising- they also have been regarded as discursive and, from a critical perspective, commodified management knowledge (e.g., Benders and van Veen 2001; Thomas 2003). This article is based on a conceptualization of management fashions as discourses and analyzes the adoption process of MO and CRM, as well as the role of interpretation and contextualization during this process.

2. MARKETING KNOWLEDGE, THEORIES AND MANAGEMENT FASHIONS

Barth (2002, p.1) defined knowledge as feelings and information, embodied skills and verbal taxonomies and concepts- i.e. all the ways of understanding that a person employs to interpret and act on the world. Theory is based on knowledge about relations between phenomena and patterns and attempts to unite processes underlying empirical regularities (Balashov and Rosenberg, 2001). Hunt (1983, p.16) defined theory as “systematically related sets of statements, including some law-like generalizations that are empirical testable”. Marketing literature has been undergoing long debates about the lack and, therefore, the need to develop a general theory of marketing, as well as the possibility and usefulness of developing it (e.g., Bartels 1968; Burton 2005; Gummesson 2002; Hunt 1983; Kotler 1972; Morgan 1996). In addition to these debates, there is also an ongoing tendency to “expand marketing semantically and territorially” (Arndt 1978) and with new “theories/paradigms”, which its supporters claim to indicate a leading shift in theory and practice and to be all-encompassing, despite the impossibility to prove their intransitoriness from their introduction forwards.

After Abrahamson (1991) introduced the use of the term “management fashions”, a new and critical movement in management literature against fashionable management “theories/ paradigms” emerged. Abrahamson (1996, p.257) defined management fashions as “the process by which management fashion setters continuously redefine both theirs and fashion followers’ collective beliefs about which management techniques lead rational management progress”. Some characteristics of management fashions include the following (Carson et al. 1999; Gibson and Tesone 2001; Hurley 2004; Ogbana and Harris 2002; Kieser 1997; Ryan; Miller and Hartwick 2002; Newell, Robertson and Swan, 2001): Even though they are claimed to be radical shifts from existing theories, they typically “re-discover” fundamentals. They are positioned as new tools for increasing performance and offer normative prescriptions for success and are claimed to be “the one” approach functional in every business contexts. They are presented as accessible on the one hand, and as ambiguous on the other. They fit the zeitgeist and use slogans and acronyms which are constantly renamed, redefined, or lead to new acronyms (e.g., customer relationship management -CRM). They are habitually legitimized by management gurus, consultants and their supporters.

As the above list of characteristics illustrates, management fashion literature generally focused on the negative connotations of the concept and, consequently, pointed to the potential harm companies can receive if they try to adopt fashions (for an exception, see Ten Bos 2000). Some of these consequences may be disappointment (financial, emotional and/or social) due to the illusion of mounting performance; severe scarcity in some strategic areas, in contrast to abundance in others; potential fragmentation in organizational structure; decrease in the deployment of employee initiation due to a top-down approach

in adoption; and risk of deterioration of the company's strengths, caused by the replication of other organizations' practices (Jackson 2001). Notwithstanding these negative aspects, management fashions may to some extent create sensitivity to and, thus, awareness of new concepts and/or methodologies.

2.1. Adoption and Diffusion Theory of Management Fashions

Diffusion theory of management fashions derives from the theory of diffusion of new products. New products have been suggested to diffuse among practitioners through stages of introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Bandwagon effects give rise to strong pressures for further diffusion. Based on an analogy to new products, management knowledge has been suggested to diffuse through similar stages (Ettore 1997): after the discovery, digestion and disillusionment stages, only hard-core supporters continue to espouse the concept. Borrowing from new product adoption and diffusion literature, a large number of researchers have tried to figure out the life-cycles of management fashions by citation analysis (e.g., Abrahamson 1996; Abrahamson and Fairchild 1999; Carson et al. 2000; Ryan and Hurley 2004). Moderators which influence marketing theory use include operational quality, goal relevance, descriptive relevance, and timeliness of the theory (Cornelissen and Lock 2005). In order to increase the rate of adoption, operational qualities of management fashions are increased through augmentation, with some additional services and benefits, such as technological solutions (e.g., software). The number of launches of management fashions is increasing and life-cycles of management fashions are becoming shorter (Gibson and Tesone 2001; Kieser 1997; Ponzi and Koenig 2002).

The motivations of practitioners in their urge for adoption are suggested to relate to the fashion's propositions for rationality and progress, on one side, and with socio-psychological factors on the other – such as frustration, boredom, striving for novelty and status differentiation (Abrahamson 1991, 1996). Non-adopters or late adopters may face the risk to appear unprogressive and laggards. Based on these motivations, the diffusion of management fashions among practitioners has been theorized under efficient choice, forced selection, and fad and fashion perspectives (see Abrahamson 1991).

Despite their typical characteristics, it is challenging to distinguish management fashions from intransitory theories because of the fact that they all have to be launched at a time and become fashionable. Management fashions literature has been seen as problematic because of its analogy to new commodity and commercial markets and thus using citation analysis to investigate the degree to which they become institutionalized within companies (Benders and van Veen 2001; Clark 2004; Heusinkveld and Benders 2005, Thomas 2003). Moreover, the popularity of an idea among academics does not indicate if and how companies adopt it. Besides, management knowledge does not resemble tangible products in its characteristic of no being self-contained packages of knowledge that "travel easily" and consumed by practitioners (Fincham and

Roslender 2004, p.322). Distinguishing between fashion setters and users and allocating them separate roles underemphasizes the agency of practitioners as fashion users and overemphasizes the role and power of consulting firms, gurus, and business schools as fashion setters. The act of building management knowledge exchange literature on the analogy of new tangible products results in a failure to acknowledge the interpretive, discursive and contextual nature of knowledge (e.g., Clark 2004; ten Bos 2000).

2.2. The Interpretation and Recontextualization of Management Knowledge

Considering knowledge as formed by a particular discursive practice (Foucault 1999), management knowledge can be conceptualized as a form of discourse that “unfolds across a number of inter-related social contexts or conjunctures” (Thomas 2003, p.776). Benders and van Veen (2001, p.40) defined management fashions as “the production and consumption of temporarily intensive management discourse, and the organizational changes induced by and associated with this discourse”. Identifying management knowledge as discourse allows us to regard it as texts developed, mediated, interpreted and appropriated by certain agents in their social practices, representations and identities.

Recognizing concepts as having a certain degree of ambiguity, Benders and van Veen (2001) emphasized the importance of interpretative space to become perceived as applicable in different situations. Intertextuality characteristic of any text exists between conjunctures, as texts are moved or appropriated from one place to another (Thomas 2003). Barthes (1977) rejected a single meaning of a literary text and argued for a proliferation of meanings derived from a text as it is read by readers and construction of the meaning through a negotiation process between the reader and the text. Thus, management knowledge originally developed by the management fashion setters is interpreted, reconstructed and reconfigured by practitioners in their own contexts and according to their own discourses. It has been suggested that management fashion setters should focus on “a certain level” of ambiguity- i.e., “interpretive viability”- for thriving interpretation, appropriation and adoption by practitioners (see e.g., Cornelissen 2002; Fincham and Roslender 2004; Scarbrough and Swan 2001; Walgenbach and Hegele 2001). Furthermore, Ottesen and Grønhaug (2002) revealed different interpretations of management orientation by managers in their specific contexts.

Contextualization is about linking observations to a set of relevant facts, events, or perspectives (Rousseau and Fried 2001), whereas recontextualization is the process by which knowledge takes on new meanings in distinct environments (Brannen 2004). Considering the role of context in organizational research enables us to consider variability among the findings of studies, to understand and interpret situations, to develop and transfer associated knowledge with

higher accuracy and robustness into new contexts, and to avoid over-generalizations (e.g., Ketchen et al. 1996; Harris and Piercy 1999).

Managers can use management knowledge in three different ways: instrumental, conceptual and symbolic (Cornelissen 2002; Cornelissen and Lock 2005; Landry, Amara and Lamari 2001; Menon and Varadarajan 1992). Instrumental use refers to direct utilization of knowledge for problem-solving and decision-making. Conceptual use is about using knowledge indirectly for the development of new interpretations and ideas, and symbolic use refers to the use of knowledge to legitimize views and positions. Because of the difficulties in the operationalization of conceptual and symbolic use, the use of management knowledge has generally been measured in terms of instrumental use (e.g., Deshpandé and Zaltman 1982).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This exploratory and interpretive study aims to understand the adoption of marketing knowledge and the role of interpretation and contextualization in this process, by examining the way in which managers and employees perceive this process. MO and CRM have been chosen as two distinct cases. In 2007, CRM was perceived as a novelty, whereas MO was at the growth stage. Although it is aimed to explore the emerging meanings- and, therefore, no specific theoretical framework for these two concepts is chosen as an a priori focus- MO is regarded as a conceptual and cultural phenomenon and CRM as a procedural tool for customer relationship development, maintenance and management.

Due to the dynamic and competitive nature of its environment and its technological turbulence, the logistics market was chosen as field of study. Despite intentions to include more companies, only five TPL service providers agreed to participate. With the intention to obtain a richer and more comparative view of the market context, one food manufacturer operating in the consumer market has also been included. Although it is intended to interview general managers who have the initiative to interpret and adopt new management knowledge, their reluctance to participate in a basic research posed an obstacle. The sales district managers of four TPL companies, the general manager of one TPL company, and the marketing manager of a food company were interviewed. So as to obtain diverse perspectives, employees are also interviewed. A series of 10 interviews averaged more than two hours were recorded and transcribed. Basic themes were developed and interpreted. To ascertain authenticity and trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985), interpretations were shared with academics in the field and with participants who expressed interest in them.

4. FINDINGS ABOUT THE ADOPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF MO

The TPL managers interviewed stated that their company adopted MO. However, findings indicate that they have had limited knowledge about the concept. This fact raised some problems against the research objective to explore the ways in which knowledge is used. However, regarding MO as the implementation of the marketing concept (e.g., Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Narver and Slater 1990) has given rise to the presumption that, even though it is not known as MO, related knowledge may be utilized by practitioners. In order to explore the use of knowledge and how they interpret it in their market and organizational context and according to their discourses, participants were encouraged to discuss their relationships with all market agents.

During interviews, all of the participants pointed to customer focus. The first quote reveals what the sales district manager of a global TPL company (Company A), which operates both in business and consumer markets, understands from MO. He interpreted being market-oriented from an internal and operational perspective:

It involves customer focus. We put service excellence first and believe that this will provide us satisfying customer capacity [...] This is our description of MO.

He did not conceive forces related to the market as important, but focused on operational quality as a tool for competitive advantage. Although the company offers customized services, the manager has developed a definite representation about what customers need and want. Moreover, their global and competitive business strategy is based on service quality and standardization with the help of technology. The context of this organization differs from other interviewed TPLs in terms of its target market; it also operates in the consumer market.

The general manager of Company E, which is allied to a holding specialized in international TPL, has developed his ideas on the basis of their marketing management planning activities and inferred that their MO is reflected as providing services considering customer needs and wants. His statements revealed that the generation of customer information is not carried out regularly for customer orientation, but rather as a step of strategic planning:

What do we do in terms of MO is, firstly, dividing the market into groups based on the sector. Then, we determine each sector's diverse resources and demands and serve them accordingly. For instance, providing containers with fortified floors for customers who want to load marble is of top importance. Dried fruit exporters want to load as much freight as they can, so as to be the first on the market;

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so we provide big container space with frequent service in the season.

Since this company as an agent of international liner shipping also serves other interviewed TPL companies, it does not directly oppose competition in this business unit. In the freight forwarding business they face competition; yet, again, they are a step ahead when compared to the other TPL companies interviewed. Because of their market position, they operate in product- and selling-oriented ways: "Direct transport services to Marseilles are a favor; when I offer it, customers will evidently demand it". The sales manager of Company B which only operates as freight forwarder and faces intense competition has based his ideas on customer retention. According to him, "the customer is not the bird on a branch, but in the bag":

As long as there are more leads and we perform any logistics process of the customer, such as providing road transportation services, we aim a partnership position.

The marketing manager of a large-scale convenience food company (Company T), on the other hand, is very well acquainted with the concept: "It is not popular anymore. A few years ago we took several consulting services about MO, but nowadays CRM is much more popular". Her educational background, a bachelor and a master's degree in marketing, and her company's market context differed from that of the other informants'. Since it is relatively easy to observe consumer behavior and to use marketing knowledge and the dynamism of the market in both an instrumental and conceptual manner, the food industry has always been a center of interest of the Turkish academia. Thus, marketing practitioners in consumer markets are more frequently exposed to concepts and have opportunities to utilize them in their context with less effort than others who are operating in business markets. Since the TPL market operates through a large number of agents who have diverse roles, and international logistics operations are relatively complex due to the export/ import procedure and the involvement of global customers, the TPL market has been under-researched in Turkey so far. Thus, practitioners of logistics companies are not frequently exposed to the MO concept; they mostly create their own understanding of how the market functions and develop their interpretations. Logistics managers employ a key account management perspective, but not necessarily a partnership perspective. Since in the business market context there are few, but big customers and a higher dependency between buyer and seller, companies have developed their own understandings and ways of customer retention. Customers with high business capacity are defined as key customers and targeted individually via technological solutions and CRM:

We regard customers with whom we have signed long-term contracts as key customers. We would like to see ourselves as their partners and be involved in their warehousing decisions (Sales district manager of freight forwarder Company D).

Rather than incorporating customers into our processes, I try to make them believe that I am their supporter by explaining and demonstrating our service. In our business, that's the way of involving people (General manager of Company E).

Interviewed companies did not collect specific customer information. They act on information originating from daily operations. The logistics companies' formal and systematic efforts to collect information about consumer needs and wants are generally derived from TQM requirements to conduct annual customer satisfaction surveys. Even when developing new services, informants do not rely on new customer opinions or specific market research activities.

Our business is about transporting finished products. Products are manufactured and routes are already determined [...] is there a sufficient amount of freight? Who is transporting them at what price level? How is it transported? For new service development decisions, these data is good enough for me. I don't ask customer for new ideas. After development I try to impose the idea (General Manager of Company E).

This finding, however, should be interpreted cautiously; in the business market context, since buyer and seller are in direct contact, information collection can be seen as a component of operations. In their study of managers' understanding of MO in the salmon farming industry, Ottesen and Grønhaug (2002) observed that instead of asking questions, interactions with customer can sometimes be more relevant and useful. Furthermore, the sales district manager of Company B proposed that customers were not ready for being asked questions and provided with customized solutions by means of CRM:

When an elder statesman visits a place, Turkish people complain about personal issues; they personalize the case. We experienced that kind of thing. Maybe it is us who could not achieve it, or maybe the sector is not appropriate for that.

Acknowledging that TPL services are at the growth stage in their life-cycle, companies respond to target market growth projections in diverse ways and according to their contexts. Based on his company's advantageous position in the market, the general manager of Company E believed that the market is not saturated and proposed that "only after saturation of the market, one needs to think about customer acquisition through innovations". In the freight forwarding business context, however, the sales manager of Company C, which focuses on some specific industries, believes that "customers have lately been aware of TPL services and are interested in it and wait to be convinced". To accomplish that, he suggests:

In order to be above competition, we should provide customer value. One way is to offer cost-reducing solutions and consulting. We

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consult about tasks its costs of which we cannot afford, but not about tasks we can't do; we advise other service providers.

All the interviewed logistics companies respond to information through customer value-creating activities based on cost reduction:

Our job is third-party. Consider logistics of already manufactured goods; this is the cost that should not incur at all. Because that product is manufactured and all costs are incurred. Actually, it is cost reduction that can revolutionize our sector (Company D).

MO literature also recognizes the importance of competitor information creation and of acting on that information (e.g., Narver and Slater 1990). Most informants articulated discourses of “not being interested in the competitor’s actions” and “being above the competition”. Nevertheless, they argued for a very competitive environment between “other” companies. Two of the informants acknowledged fierce competition, while contending to collect competitor information “spontaneously”, but not systematically. When probed, an informant accepted that they tried to collect competitor intelligence originating from daily operations and further explained how he had to give reasons for a customer loss. Since the logistics market is global, embraces several transportation modes and also includes logistics activities carried out by the producers, the measurement of market share and competition level rests on presumptions of geographical boundaries and the division of the market across transportation modes. Moreover, rapid growth rates and the lack of systematic data collection by a global agency make it hard to measure market size in the TPL market (Chatterjee and Tsai 2002). Unlike the food market in which companies can act on very detailed competitor information collected on a daily basis, TPL firms do not have many tools for developing a clear vision of the competition; yet, they identify and compete with close competitors.

The findings suggested the idea of approaching the MO construct from a supply-chain perspective. Other researchers (Langerak 2001; Grunert et al. 2005; Mason et al. 2006) previously emphasized this idea as channel conceptualization of MO. Being market-oriented and creating superior customer value depends not only on relationships between customers and competitors, but also on other agents of the supply chain, such as intermediaries and suppliers. A comparatively lower level of MO of suppliers (shipowners, for instance) hinders the company’s attempts to develop market-oriented capabilities and strategies. In a similar sense, intermediaries may also buffer the company’s abilities to develop market-oriented behaviors. In the food market context, in order to create superior value for end-users, the manufacturer, in this case, Company T, has to satisfy its immediate customers, i.e., suppliers in the first case and intermediaries in the second. Value added throughout the supply chain influences the value that the end-user receives. Thus, the level of MO of one chain member may be influenced by the level of MO of other agents of the chain.

Main proficiency lies in procurement. How many suppliers can I work with and how much qualified should they be? That's the real thing (Company C).

There are some strategic tasks, such as in-package handling. You don't want anybody else to do business with your supplier in the automotive supplies market. Because that's the only difference you can offer. When you work effectively with your supplier and assign capable employees to the critical control points, then you acquire that automotive company (Company D).

The findings also gave reasons to take power relations among channel members into account. Channel power is associated with a company's ability or potential to influence and/or alter other chain members' behavior (Mason et al. 2006). It can be acquired through distinctive tangible and intangible asset – such as high investment capital, brand equity, competencies and products which cannot be imitated easily, are rare, and do not have substitutes. Consistent with Grunert et al.'s (2005) propositions, the findings revealed that an unbalanced chain may hinder the entire chain's and the comparatively less powerful companies' ability to develop MO. Food company T, for instance, cannot put market-oriented culture into practice and develop superior customer value when, for instance, distributors “buffer” and do not bounce their activities back to the end-users. Similarly, in the case of shipowners, when they, as the most powerful agents in liner shipping demand a raise in prices, freight forwarders “lose their option to respond to customer needs to reduce cost”. The companies interviewed mostly employed multiple points of contact for customers and enabled coordination among functions and employees through technological solutions of CRM.

5. FINDINGS ABOUT THE ADOPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF CRM

Findings revealed a high level of popularity of CRM. All informants knew the concept and used it instrumentally, conceptually and symbolically. All of the participant companies had adopted operational CRM. Their conceptual perspective of CRM is based on their customer focus as described in the previous section. Most participants, however, do not use analytical or interactive CRM.

Questions about their adoption process and the role of, for instance, consultants and top managers remained unanswered. The fact that informants who accepted to participate in such a basic study were mostly sales district managers resulted in a negative consequence: they had no clear information about the adoption process. Nevertheless, finding out that the general manager of Company E did not have enough information was surprising. Since the general manager regarded CRM mainly as a technical tool, he explained how the technical division of the holding to which Company E is affiliated was

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responsible and had developed CRM software in which he so far had had little interest. These findings support Abrahamson's (1991) fashion perspective: after something becomes a fashion in the industry, companies mostly jump on the bandwagon. A seminar about CRM given by the Uluslararası Nakliyeciler Derneği (International Shippers' Association) in 2003 has led the way. Only after initiation did participants develop a sense of the concept, mostly through its practical use of technical components, such as software, but not through extensive training or consultation. The finding that only small technical project teams had been educated by consultants and that these teams trained other employees afterwards showed that the role of fashion-setters in the adoption process is not as straightforward as is generally assumed.

Unlike the other participant companies, only Company A had an extensive corporate strategy based on service excellence through extensive use of technology:

Our general manager, who is conscious of the superiority of the management of humans by machines rather than by emotions, made the decision to use CRM in 2004. He said: "Do not handle complaints informally; I want to see them". We have lots of CRM applications now, and we consistently develop our practice.

Informants use CRM conceptually. The sales district manager of Company A defined CRM as a technical system which enables service excellence. The quotations below reveal a different usage of CRM concepts; they are used in relation with TQM concepts or interpreted as process management, as a methodology and as a system into which they have "transferred their customer relations".

We deem CRM as sales/marketing which is based on knowledge of the market and customers. When you add TQM to CRM, they coalesce (Company C).

In CRM, documented information is valued, not free-floating one. Entering data, preparing action plans; these are process management. CRM is a process management project [...] It is kind of a methodology of taking the customer's pulse (Company B).

The second quotation above shows that, in the immediate context, the CRM concept is established around using databases with its tangible software components in business. Findings revealed that management fashions, augmented with some additional benefits and tangible products, are adopted widely.

Findings about the instrumental use of CRM mostly reveal the adoption of operational CRM, but not of its analytical and interactive parts, for customer retention. Benefits that participant companies have gained from CRM were

explained with phrases such as “better customer relations”, “recording and tracking key customer data and converting them into business opportunities”, “handling customer complaints better”, and “enabling interfunctional coordination and institutionalization”. Only Company A utilized CRM in all functional and managerial sub-systems, also taking advantage of it for bonding with key customers; they provided customers software that enabled them to enter the interactive operations system and place orders by themselves. Analytical CRM is literally used only by Company A, while other informants rarely or never use analytical CRM. Informants reported that, despite the initial enthusiasm for adopting CRM, their current use was ineffective and their expectations had not been fulfilled. They attributed their low performance to the unsuitability of CRM for the TPL market context, contrary to the academic belief that CRM suits the needs of business markets. The main reason why CRM does not suit the current TPL market context may be as follows: Participants mostly focused on cost reduction as a customer retention strategy, rather than on targeting strategies; hence, the goal relevance (Cornelissen and Lock 2005) of CRM to the current Turkish TPL market context is not satisfactory. Moreover, as the quotations below about the “unsuitability of CRM for the logistics sector” show, despite the wide use of CRM, its operational quality (Cornelissen and Lock 2005) is not considered satisfactory.

Our CRM use is not as we had intended. We use it for control of employee performance. Everybody says that they are using it, but implementations are different from initial aims. We take advantage of only 10% of the system [...] During one-to-one contacts, using CRM accurately means wasting time. You can't just say “wait a minute, I have to enter data and do some analysis” to your customer (Company C).

We developed a very simple system. We collect sufficient, but not detailed data. Otherwise we cannot deal with it. Since we have lots of customers, we don't need detailed information about them [...] I don't think CRM suits our sector; it is not functional (Company E).

We have benefited from CRM to some extent, but I don't think customers are ready for it. We encountered lots of problems; customers personalized the case. CRM did not create any change in our previous methods. It was maybe because of our failure or it does not suit our sector (Company B).

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Marketing literature has an on-going tendency to develop new theories and marketing management fashions. Their supporters claim them to be a paradigm shift, despite the impossibility to prove their intransitoriness in their introduction phase. The aim of this study is to explore the adoption process of MO and CRM and examine the role of interpretation and contextualization during this process.

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Because of being a business services market, the logistics market has been thought as a convenient field of study. Since business markets have fewer and larger customers, and since there is higher dependency and personal contact between buyer and seller, a higher level of MO and CRM adoption and use were expected. Findings, however, revealed that in the TPL market context in Turkey companies are familiar with the concept of MO, but they conceptualize it as customer orientation. Moreover, it is found to be less popular than it is expected. This finding supported the proposition that the popularity of an idea among academics does not indicate if and how it is adopted by practitioners.

Furthermore, due to the complexity of the TPL market structure and functioning, it can be suggested that the TPL market in Turkey has so far been under-researched. Therefore, TPL companies have not been regularly exposed to the MO concept; they mostly develop their own understanding of the market within their specific context. This finding supported the proposition that academic interest can be a driver in the awareness of new concepts and the adoption process. The participants' understanding of customer focus stems from their knowledge of TQM, which they widely adopted because of international market requirements to be certified according to ISO 9000 standards. A finding, that is not sought for, but emerged during the field study, was that companies developed their TQM understandings and perspectives. This finding also showed that no longer popular management theories do not really fade away.

Findings about the companies' practices in terms of MO supported the supply chain perspective – i.e., a channel conceptualization of MO. Creating superior customer value through MO depends on relations with customers and competitors and other agents of the supply chain, such as intermediaries and suppliers. A comparatively lower level of MO of upstream and downstream channel partners hinders the company's attempts to develop market-oriented capabilities and strategies. Therefore, a "value network" perspective can be useful for practitioners.

In the case of CRM, it can be proposed that companies jumped on the bandwagon after CRM became fashion in the industry. Only after initiation did they develop a sense of it, mostly through its practical use of technical components (such as software), but not through extensive training or consultation. Moreover, they do not use it effectively. The finding that informants, whether sales district managers or the general manager of Company E, did not have enough information about the process signifies that the dissemination and adoption process is not as apparent and straightforward as usually thought. In the immediate context, the concept of CRM is established around the software component in business. This finding indicated that management fashions augmented with some additional benefits and tangible products are adopted widely.

Despite the wide use of CRM, its operational quality is not satisfactory. Contrary to the academic belief that CRM suits the needs of business markets,

participants do not implement it properly and regard it as unsuitable for the Turkish TPL market context. Since participants mostly focus on cost reduction as a customer retention strategy, rather than on targeting strategies, the goal relevance of CRM to the current Turkish TPL market context is not considered satisfactory.

The findings of the present study are parallel to Ottesen and Grønhaug's (2002) findings: managers' understanding of theoretical concepts can deviate from academic conceptualizations. Additionally, findings about the adoption and use of MO and CRM indicated interpretive diversity among informants. Diversity, both in terms of content and frame (Krepapa and Berthon 2003), stems from the organizational context and management discourses. For instance, a management discourse based on a strict focus on quality with a definition of conformance to requirements and standardization through IT entails looking at the MO concept from an operational service excellence perspective. Moreover, findings also supported Cornelissen and Lock's (2005) propositions. Accordingly, instrumental use is negatively correlated with substantive theories and devices (such as MO), but positively correlated with methodological theories (such as CRM in this paper).

Although this study has its limitations, especially in composition and size of the research sample, this study may form the basis for an expanded research effort that is international.

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