



## Bridging Proactive Market Orientation to Startups' Marketing Approach: Theoretical Background and Case Studies



### Proaktif Pazar Odaklılık ile Startupların Pazarlama Anlayışı Arasında Köprü Kurmak: Teorik Temel ve Örnek Vakalar



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#### Abstract

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Rapid change of global market dynamics makes the survival of startups difficult. This study investigates the integration of startups' marketing approach with proactive market orientation in order to adapt these changing dynamics of the market. Customer orientation, new-product development, innovation orientation and competitiveness are explained as encouraging components of proactive market orientation to be robust and long-run in the in competitive environment. Case studies of the paper are involving the most innovative and valuable brands of the world as well as customer-centric oriented. Findings showed that the startups in the research sample that integrate innovation and proactive market orientation are tend to grow-up rapidly and achieve success in long run. The most fundamental purpose of the paper is to emphasize the importance of marketing approach through those companies' proactive behaviors. With the continuous startup culture, the companies can give inspirations for the early-stage ventures while designing their marketing strategies. The article presents a strategic point of view based on theoretical background of the phenomenon and recommends a holistic roadmap for practitioners in the journey of entrepreneurship also pioneering for the further studies.

**Keywords:** Proactive market orientation, innovation, startup.

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Küresel pazar dinamiklerinin hızlı değişimi, startupların hayat mücadelesini zorlaştırmaktadır. Çalışma, bu mücadeledeki startupların pazarlama anlayışlarının proaktif pazar odaklılık ile entegrasyonuna odaklanmaktadır. Araştırmada müşteri odaklılık, yeni ürün geliştirme, yenilik odaklılık ve rekabetçilik, proaktif pazar odaklılığı teşvik eden bileşenler olarak açıklanmaktadır. Proaktif pazar yönelimine sahip startupların rekabet çevresinde uzun soluklu ve sağlam bir yapıya kavuştuğu varsayılmaktadır. Çalışmanın örnek olay incelemeleri müşteri odaklı yaklaşımı önceliklendiren, dünyanın en yenilikçi ve değerli markalarını içermektedir. Çalışma bulguları örneklem içerisinde yer alan startupların, yenilikçilik ve proaktif pazar odaklılık ile entegre olmalarından ötürü hızla büyüme gösterdiklerini ve uzun dönemli başarı yakaladıklarını göstermiştir. Çalışmanın en temel amacı, bu firmaların uygulamış oldukları proaktif pazarlama davranışlarını iyi bir uygulama örneği olarak sunarak pazarlama yaklaşımının önemini vurgulamaktır. Bu firmaların halen sürdürmekte oldukları startup kültürü, pazarlama stratejilerini tasarlayan ve yolun başındaki girişimcilere ilham vereceği düşünülmektedir. Araştırmada, pazar yönelimi ile ilgili temel teorik çalışmalara yer verilirken girişimcilik yolculuğunda ilerleyen uygulayıcılara pazarlama kararları için stratejik bir bakış açısı ve bütünsel bir yol haritası sunulmaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlar ile literatüre katkı sağlanması ve gelecek çalışmalara öncülük edilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Proaktif pazar odaklılık, yenilik, startup.

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## 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic landscape of business, technology is the driver of change. Companies are propelled for adaptation to survive. Without the integration of market intelligence and innovation, new-product developments are not expected to achieve success or ventures are scaled up. Effective marketing strategies enable businesses to differentiate among competitors, create value and establish a strong brand presence.

Firms performing a great degree of marketing activities (Deng and Dart, 1994; Narver and Slater, 1990; Deshpandé et al., 1993; Hunt and Morgan, 1995; Kohli et al., 1993; Day, 1994; Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993) are named as market-oriented companies since the philosophical point of view (Lichtenthal and Wilson, 1992; Webster Jr, 1992) is left behind. Market intelligence gathered from customers and competitors are used to evaluate the formulation of the most accurate marketing strategies (Narver and Slater, 1990; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Day, 1994). Success of marketing strategy directly affects the firm performance through the positive outputs on profit, sales volume and new-product development (Deshpandé et al., 1993; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Slater and Narver, 1994; Li and Calantone, 1998; Atuahene-Gima, 1995; Pelham and Wilson, 1995; Han et al., 1998. Narver and Slater, 1990), in their study conducted that market-oriented company is defined as customer oriented as well. Today customer oriented is also defined as value oriented (Kotler et al., 2016). Businesses big or small, global company or startup should focus on solving problems by creating value (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010).

Startups are the technology oriented and scaled up ventures. In other words, scaling means expanding the startup's target audience *ceteris paribus*, while keeping its value creation infrastructure the same (Sanasi et al., 2023: 1). Those ventures that grow up globally are the main locomotive of today's global economy. From financial technologies to e-commerce sector, they are dominating all industries. Although they scaled up and become a giant global company, they keep the startup culture as organizational behavior based on market orientation approach (Narver and Slater, 1990). This attitude makes them to lead the market and control the risks of the dynamics coming up with technology. While market orientation meets firm performance, there are other opinions finding out the results that (Berthon et al., 1999; Frosch, 1996) as if the approach is only focused on customer current needs, there could be detraction from innovativeness (Berthon et al., 1999) or marketing myopia about research and development (R&D) activities (Frosch, 1996).

Today businesses, big or small, are much more innovative to continue the long-term relationship with the customers (Han et al., 1998; Hult et al., 2004) and create brand loyalty among their current customers (Aaker, 1991). A strong market focus combines the benefits of customers' latent needs that are satisfied with the innovative solutions and new-product development (Baker and Sinkula, 2005). Thus, Narver et al., (2004) highlights the importance of unexpressed needs and wants that is the unexplained side of market orientation and called as *proactivity* that could be offered by innovation and new-products.

According to Schindehutte et al., (2008) proactive market orientation is the milestone of the entrepreneurship behavior. Strategic orientations are aimed to meet the implicit or potential demands of customers that they are also not aware of have been around for a long time. Organizational capabilities and opportunities for evaluating valuable business ideas in the field of entrepreneurship is associated with the issue (Bulut et al., 2013). While solving the problem, technology and innovation is in relation with the business idea to create a global demand. Likewise, Levitt put forward globalization makes the markets and customers alike each other (Levitt, 1983).

The most important feature that distinguishes today's entrepreneurship from traditional entrepreneurship is that they have a technological infrastructure. In this way, they can reach global scales and grow rapidly. They can monitor the customer behavior through marketing automation and a wide variety of tools. This also increases the accuracy and reliability of the customer information (Bagshaw, 2015).

In this research, marketing orientation approach of startup companies are analyzed as the primary reason of their failure is raised from the lack of marketing activities (CB Insights, 2023). Hills et. al., (2008) mentioned that the right marketing strategy is the main issue for entrepreneurs to grow up by increasing sales volume. According to that, research question of the study is defined here under below:

*RQ: Could proactive market orientation serve as a bridge for startups' marketing insight?*

As startups are technology oriented and innovative ventures, the marketing approach is discussed under proactive market orientation as it is implemented by today's global startup companies as listed under exemplary cases. The aim of the paper is to promote the phenomenon for the early-stage startups to set their marketing approach in light of proactivity based on the fundamentals in market orientation literature.

## **2. Understanding Proactivity in Market Orientation**

In the studies (Narver and Slater, 1990; Deshpandé and Farley, 1998; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Kohli et al.,1993) carried out till the research of Narver et al., (2004), market orientation was considered from a single dimension. This approach is insufficient to meet the struggle that businesses face with the competitors in a world that the only constant is change. Although Kohli and Jaworski (1990) mentioned the necessity of understanding the future demands and wants, Narver et al. (2004) found this explanation very philosophic and insufficient for implementation in real world. As it is difficult to realize the latent needs and wants of the customers, once it is predicted, the businesses have to opportunity to lead the market and compete with the other business actors (Narver et al., 2004) and benefit from managing its capabilities and strengths in a proactive approach (Randhawa et al., 2021).

Today, technology has become the main dimension that should be followed up in each sector. For businesses, product development process should be integrated with technology and innovation to provide new products and services to create superior customer value (Narver et al., 2004). As companies could produce with high degree of novelty and quality, this shows their capability to implementation and adoption for market dynamics (Mendoza-Silva, 2021).

Innovation is defined by Schumpeter (1934) with an approach independent of an economic perspective in 1934. According to Schumpeter's view, innovation could not be explained without the effect of market dynamics while launching a new product or entering a new market (Schumpeter, 1934). This would also lead the literature of entrepreneurship as the phenomenon is not a set of activities explaining just by economic point of view, it has contributions to socioeconomic growth and development (Polowczyk, 2012). Zhao (2005) mentioned the integration of innovation and entrepreneurship to reach success in a dynamic market environment.

Technology orientation is not sufficient solely to grow up and create sustainable value for customers (Picken, 2017; Qureshi et al, 2017). To reach market intelligence, the feedback from the customers even during the process of product development is precious (Ries, 2011) and therefore Blank (2006) recommends the entrepreneurs to get out of the building and keep in touch with the potential and current customers (Blank, 2006; Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Ries, 2011; Blank and Dorf, 2012).

Furthermore, the businesses have the advantage to explore customer behavior on marketing automations and data analytics today (Bagshaw, 2015). While market intelligence has the importance for future marketing decisions, it is easier to get access via technology. Market intelligence (Narver and Slater, 1990; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) is crucial for shaping strategies and implementing tactics, it also very useful for pivoting before allocation of all resources of the company, especially for startups (Blank and Dorf, 2012; Ries, 2011).

In the research of Atuahene-Gima et. al., (2005) and Tsai et al., (2008) it is concluded that proactive market orientation positively affects the new product performance. Auh and Menguc (2005) found out that proactive market orientation supports radical innovation in product development. According to Voola and O’Cass (2010) proactive market orientation positively affect business performance.

While firm performance could not reach the ultimate level for startups, they could not survive in a risky environment. Therefore, market orientation especially in a proactive manner is important for them to have a long-run life cycle. To be technology oriented is not sufficient solely as the customers of today are much more value oriented. Kotler et al., (2016) combines the customer orientation for creating value as it is also defined in business idea generation process for startups (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010).

### **3. Implementation of Proactivity through Startups Marketing Approach**

While Schumpeter (1934) highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship for economic development, the relationship between the innovation and market are also emphasized. A venture could achieve success as growing up when it realizes the market dynamics and takes marketing decisions according to product-market fit (Ries, 2011). As Kohli and Jaworski (1990) defined market orientation under behavioral approach, it was also meant as pivoting the marketing strategy according to the market intelligence reached by the current situation of the market (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) via customer orientation (Narver and Slater, 1990). Customer orientation would be deeply understandable to reach the unexpressed needs as to be the game changer and lead the market (Narver et al., 2004). This could be managed by new-product development via innovative touches and following closely technology. While the market orientation approach first mention in the beginning of 1990’s and intersect with proactivity in the beginning of 2000’s, technology is also evaluating and these new type of business models are generated. Thus, startups that have different type of business models are also striving for long-term relationship with the customers and value creation.

In this section, the suggested issues are explained more detailed for the practical implementation and bridging the proactive market orientation practices to startups’ marketing approach.

#### **3.1. Customer Orientation**

Narver and Slater (1990) defines market orientation as an organizational culture of the business. Customer orientation is important to observe the current demand of the market and satisfied these needs (Choi et al., 2019). Being customer oriented enables the businesses to develop innovative solutions to create customer value and also enhance the limits of innovation capabilities while anticipating the future demand and needs (Thoumrungroje and Racela, 2022). Customer orientation is also related with Lean Startup that is surrounded an MVP (minimum viable product) model that the business idea should be pivoting after the market intelligence gathered from customers (Ries, 2011; Blank and Dorf, 2012).

Market intelligence and dissemination of this information vertical and horizontal within the organization was mentioned by the antecedents of market orientation (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Day, 1994; Deshpandé and Farley; 1998) while in the beginning of the discussions. Today, to increase productivity and efficiency, the customer information is still valid and useful for decision makers. The advantage of marketing managers is that they can monitor and follow up this information via technologic tools and analytics (Bagshaw, 2015). Therefore, it is easier to make a prediction and forecast about the market tendency and this is an opportunity to encourage proactive activities to become reliable and predictable. As customer orientation enables to communicate with the customers to adapt the new demands of the market and also to attract new segments.

### 3.2. New-product Development

In 2004, Narver et al. put forward a research study questioning the relationship of market orientation and new-product success (Narver et al., 2004). A strong market-oriented company seeks for a solid market environment and this approach also affects the product improvement (Baker and Sinkula, 2005). New product development is one of the key drivers for establishing sustainable growth and achieving long-term success by embracing the change among the dynamics of the competitive markets (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1995).

New-product development process could use resources within the company both financially and managerially. Therefore, to reach the forecasts of the market dynamics would provide benefits for the companies and especially for startups that have limited resources and financial assets. New products and services as well as product-market fit would enable to provide long-term firm sustainability for startups (Ries, 2011).

### 3.3. Innovation Orientation

Innovation orientation refers to company efforts to fostering innovation through its operations, business model and managerial decisions (Parsons, 1991). A company focusing on newness in product development or administrative issues turn to innovative structure ensuring to address real customer challenges.

According to Farzaneh et al. (2022) “...organizations with high levels of IO will pursue proactive and growth-oriented strategies focused on learning from the outside and will pursue more information-based strategies aimed at creating value for customers. In contrast, organizations with low innovation orientation will pursue strategies that are internally focused, emphasize standardization, and are reactive” (Farzaneh et al., 2022: 56).

High degree of innovation orientation is related with the innovation capability of the company as to identify opportunities and align the efforts for new offerings (Meliá et al., 2010). Those companies act dynamically and leverage sources for new know-how (Li et al, 2019). Investing in developing and improving new products and services is priority for innovation-oriented companies. As embracing innovation enables the companies to gain an innovative positioning in the market contributing to positive brand image (Brexendorf et al., 2015). Continuous innovative approach will also lead the relevance and longevity and play a vital role for customer royalty and long-term advocacy.

### 3.4. Competitiveness

Competitiveness is able to understand the long-term strategies and long-term capabilities as well as the strengths and weaknesses of company's current and potential competitors (Porter, 1980). While Narver and Slater (1990) put forward the term as a component of market orientation definition, Deshpandé and Farley (1998) criticized the approach and added that more efforts should be used for customer behavior rather than competitors (Narver and Slater, 1990; Deshpandé and Farley, 1998).

In technology-oriented industries and especially for startups, being competitive can derive from being proactive as providing new solutions to the customers would be able to create competitive advantage and becoming the market leader. Although some scholars (Ranjan and Foropon, 2021; Sewdass and Toit, 2014), support that only pivoting (Ries, 2011; Blank and Dorf, 2012) or feedback gathered from customers are sufficient competitive intelligence is crucial for industry-based strategies (Porter, 1980; Sadeghiani et al., 2022).

## 4. Case Studies

Case studies are used in the condition to reply “how? why?” questions while designing qualitative research and the focus is on contemporary events (Yin, 2009). As in our research, the startups behaviors are analyzed under their marketing orientation. Thus, it is preferred to examine the situation deeply and understand the phenomenon by direct observation. According to Wohlin (2021), a case study is an empirical investigation of a case, using multiple data collection methods, to study a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, and with the investigator(s) not taking an active role in the case investigated (Wohlin, 2021: 3).

As in any case study, our selection of cases was key actors of the related industry (Siggelkow, 2007) based on valid and reliable two reports that ranked the sample startups as the top innovative and brand value companies of the world. We used a theoretical sampling process to purposefully select certain global companies (Patton, 2014) that ensured apply the phenomenon of proactivity in their market strategies. They are founded in a garage with young entrepreneurs and still called themselves as startups. The ranking data is gathered from “The 50 Most Innovative Companies of 2023” provided by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) based on BCG Global Innovation Survey 2023 (Boston Consulting Group, 2023). Brand equity results are gathered from the study of Brand Finance Global 500 report for 2023 ranking “The World’s Top 500 Most Valuable Brands” (Brand Finance, 2023).

### 4.1. Apple

According to the research of BCG, Apple is the most innovative company in 2023 (Boston Consulting Group, 2023) and also in the second rank for the most valuable brand of the world (Brand Finance, 2023). Apple was found by three young entrepreneurs Steve Jobs, Ronald Wayne and Steve Wozniak in the garage of Jobs’ house in California in 1976 while they were just twenties. The company was aimed to provide personal computers for consumers and transformation personal electronics industry. Consumer’s user experience is the priority and the main marketing strategy of Apple which lead to brand loyalty and brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Aaker, 2007; Kim et al., 2003; Wu and Ho, 2014). Apple’s products fulfilled with design and innovation, played a fundamental role to lead the consumer’s needs and wants while technology is improving in high speed. In 2007, customers meet iPhone as a new-technology product called smart phones. Today Apple also contributes to apps industry with Apple Store since it was launched in 2008, the market value of the app industry exceeded \$1 billion within a year (Jia et al, 2020).

Steve Jobs often describes Apple as "the biggest startup on the planet" even after the company became one of the most valuable companies in the world. The reason that Jobs continues to use this term is the culture of the company that does not change. Apple is still focusing on innovation with creativity and having energy to take risks as well as dividing responsibilities among teamwork members and opening place for new business ideas (Milian, 2011).

### 4.2. Tesla

Tesla is in the second place in the most innovative rank list (Boston Consulting Group, 2023 and also high jump in brand value ranking as entered in top 10 in 2023 with the place of 9<sup>th</sup> rank as it was in 28 for 2022 ranking (Brand Finance, 2023).

Elon Mask is the CEO of the company since 2014 who was the ex-CEO of PayPal which was one of the most successful startups in the world. In the members of high management team include ex-founders of Google and e-bay (Wikipedia, 2023). Tesla is the game changer in automotive sector launching his innovative electric vehicle in the industry. Tesla’s marketing strategies differ from the traditional ones as it is observed to build in value creation which is the ultimate goal of canvas model

for startup's business strategy (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010). Tesla doesn't deliver products by car dealers and the customers directly purchase the cars by online purchasing systems which can be defined under e-commerce delivery channel. Also, Tesla does not use traditional marketing media channels like TV ads and Elon Mask is the main celebrity to use himself for company advertising. Tesla prefers digital marketing and social media platforms to communicate with the potential customers and also keeps in touch with the followers. It is shown in Tesla's positioning strategy as behaving as a premium brand inspiring the competitors. While advanced technology solutions are provided, the features performing under a positive perception of luxury are delivered through the innovative vehicles (Zeithaml, 1998; Kim et al., 2003).

### **4.3. Amazon**

Amazon's journey is defined as a transformation from being a startup to becoming an e-commerce giant company through the light of innovation, adaptation and solid marketing strategy. When Jeff Bezos starts with a modest online bookstore in this garage in 1994, he saw the opportunity coming by the evaluation of the market and a new type of purchasing habit. Reaching market intelligence and pivoting after the customer feedback (Ries, 2011) is the pivoting strategy of Bezos to add more product groups to increase variety beyond books. Today Amazon is in the first rank for most valuable brands category (Brand Finance, 2023) and keeping the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank in the most innovative companies in the world (Boston Consulting Group, 2023). This strategic decision transformed Amazon to a global marketplace allowing the third parties to sell and offer their products. This move created a self-sustained ecosystem that both parties as sellers and buyers integrate and converge each other for the organic growth of the platform.

In 2005, Amazon launched Amazon Prime offering services full of customer benefits that directly enhances the customer loyalty (Aaker, 1991). Amazon is the leading brand of e-commerce ecosystem as offering FBA (Fulfillment by Amazon) and FBM (Fulfillment by Merchant) programs to increase e-commerce while contributing the whole export volumes of companies and even brand-new entrepreneur attempts (Seyman, 2022). The cloud platform delivered under Amazon Web Services including cutting-edge technologies turned the brand as a global powerhouse of technology.

### **4.4. Alphabet**

Alphabet was founded by the founders of Google, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who founded Google in a garage in 1998. It is the parent company of Google and a startup which was born in Silicon Valley in 2015. Within 8 years it is an ultimate success to become the fourth rank in the most innovative companies of the world (Boston Consulting Group, 2023). It is also an example for intrapreneurial behavior of Google that a new company is revealed under firm-level entrepreneurship behavior (Neessen et al., 2019)

Alphabet could be described as the umbrella corporation encompassing Google and its subsidiaries committing to diversity and innovation. Creating customized user experience is the priority for Alphabet also offering user-friendly and user-centric solutions for customers. Also, the advantage of Google's advertising platforms is used by Alphabet for connecting businesses with their audiences. The Google brand that built trust and loyalty is benefited by Alphabet for consistency and brand recognition (Keller, 1993) among the consumers.

### **4.5. Microsoft**

Microsoft identified with innovation, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit takes place among global technology companies for a long time. Since founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen, it was a garage startup with a limited resource at home. By years it turned to a global company which is awarded

being the most innovative (Boston Consulting Group, 2023) and most valuable brand in fourth rank for 2023 (Brand Finance, 2023). Microsoft followed a consistent attitude in brand image with its Windows logo and the minimalist design of Microsoft products to increase brand recognition (Wu and Ho, 2014; Aaker, 2007). Also, it maintains user-friendly products that able to enhance the dissemination of software tools global base.

Microsoft also applied a strategy that is focusing on customer needs and wants via customer centric approach and for latent needs update and develop the products through the intelligence reached by customers feedback (Ries, 2011; Narver et al., 2004). All customers are unique and their experience should be positive user experience.

Microsoft also adapts its business model with the development of technology and add cloud system solutions by the understanding of diversity. While it is known through software products, Microsoft also entered hardware industry launching tablets and laptops under Surface line to compete in the computer sector leaders.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The common point of the exemplary cases is that the companies achieved the success through the proactive marketing strategies and innovation approach. As market orientation evolved to value orientation (Kotler et al., 2016), creating value for customers is the heart of business models of each company as well as startups (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010). Steve Jobs defined Apple as startup while the revenue is over billion USD's and it becomes the most valuable company all over the world. It is because of the fact that startups have an organizational culture (Marangoz, 2016) and it still continues in the company although they turn to a big scaled company. While people are happily working it also creates to be productive and put forward new business ideas. This will lead to intrapreneurship (Asiaei et al., 2020), as well as shown in Alphaphet story that was born in Google. As Narver and Slater (1990) first explained the behavioral market orientation, it in fact built the fundamentals of today's businesses which are scaled up and become global giant companies with the customers from different countries demanding for the same brand (Levitt, 1983).

In the cases, it is shown that the business ideas are all innovative for the current markets and therefore they had the strength to lead the customers. It has been nearly 15 years when first iPhone is launched, and people learned what a smartphone is. Today there are still long queues in front of Apple stores when a new model of iPhone is meeting with the customers. Schumpeter (1934) first explained the entrepreneurship through innovation and defended that the economic point of view solely is insufficient to meet the phenomenon. Today it is easily observed in reality and also the journeys of the research cases.

In 2000's, the global companies are mentioned as Unilever, P&G, Henkel or Shell. These brands are used to be discussed in marketing classes with their marketing strategies or advertising methods. Today, it is evolved to the companies which do not exist in these days. Tesla changed the point of view related with traditional advertising channels as Elon Mask sent a Twit and it reaches all the audiences. Also, no car dealers, the customer all around the world can directly reach this global company.

These company strategies meet the customer latent needs and wants as the customers even do not predict by themselves. In the example of Tesla, the borders are crushed, and customers get used to this new model purchasing process. It shows that Tesla teaches a new model of shopping system to customers. The same approach is observed by Amazon while the first business model started with online bookstore, it turned to everything online store. Thus, customers learn to shop while they are at home or do not have time to go outside. It can be said that all these new offerings are coming from proactive market orientation of these innovative companies.



As it is the fact that growing up rapidly and becoming the most valuable brands of the world comes by taking proactive marketing decisions with the support of innovation and technology. It takes nearly 50 years, since Microsoft was founded in 1975, however it is still in the top ranks among valuable brands. It is the result of being adaptive and following up technology as well as keeping in touch with the market and target customer. When the companies become customer oriented, they collect the information to use for new-product development as well as satisfying current needs.

Results show that in the exemplary cases, all companies are both technology and market oriented since they grow up very fast in a short time and become scalable in worldwide. This result is reached as the startups have the marketing insight in proactive approach feeding by innovation and technology. Those are the drivers that lead the market and push the potential customers to have the desire to reach the product. Therefore, it is concluded that the research question is explained in a positive point of view that *proactive active orientation serves as a bridge for startups' marketing insight*.

Proactive market orientation and innovation together enable the organizations adaptable changes in the market environment. Being customer-centric and using innovation tool as the key driver are essential for long-term life cycles for a company. When these two components act together, they turn the startups to become the actors that teach the customers. These new offerings create customer loyalty as the brands become powerful and cool and have a strong relationship with the customers in long run.

## 6. Conclusion

Companies that integrate innovation and proactive market orientation tend to achieve success in long run compared to others. The ability to anticipate the changing dynamics of the market with innovative offerings carry them to become the industry leaders.

Startups, surviving with different dynamics with limited resources ignores the behavior of the target customers although today access information is much easier. The importance of market intelligence is emphasized by the antecedents nearly forty years ago. Market automation systems or data analytics enable the companies to monitor the customers and their behavior. Startups could benefit from these analyzes with lower costs. These behaviors would let them to be more innovative and creative to value proposition and strengthen their brands.

According to the results, the study aimed to mention the importance of proactive market orientation approach to be more practical for startups as well as traditional entrepreneurship. The world is demonstrated by entrepreneurs and the academic research should be more focused on these ventures and their behaviors as it is observed that there is still a wide gap in the literature related to startup companies. Marketing is essential for startups as there are many other related marketing topics that the new ventures should be aware. Market segmentation, new market entries, customer behaviors, brand equity or international marketing could be the next research topics related with startups. By prioritizing marketing approach early on in entrepreneurship literature, startups can set themselves up for more marketing efforts. Therefore, it is suggested for marketing scholars in their further studies to focus on startup behaviors through different areas of marketing.

Furthermore, there are some limitations as the companies are selected based on two global studies as it can be differentiated on sector based or more specific areas (fintech, biotechnology, e-commerce etc.). Also, the number of best practices is limited, and this could be increased with the future studies. Last but not least, the relationship between the innovation and proactive market orientation could be analyzed based on startups marketing approach as building robust bridge between the elements.

In essence, bridging proactive market orientation to startups' marketing approach is not just a strategic necessity, it is recommended to be a mindset that propels startups to be survival in a risky

environment through sustained success. Startups tend to raise an adaptive organizational culture that embraces change, values market intelligence and prioritizes innovative developments. At this point of view, the research results are aimed to contribute to the startup ecosystem as well as future academic studies.

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