

# MARKET ORIENTATION AND MARKET INTELLIGENCE GENERATION OF NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENTS: MULTIPLE-CASE STUDIES OF SMALL TO MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN JAPAN

Kazutaka Komiya (Kagawa University, k-komiya@ec.kagawa-u.ac.jp)

Junji Inoguchi (Otaru University of Commerce, inojun-u@res.otaru-uc.ac.jp)

Woonho Kim (Nihon University, unokim71@yahoo.co.jp)

Takuya Urakami (Kinki University, urakami@bus.kindai.ac.jp)

## ABSTRACT

Many studies pointed out that market orientation was understood as a culture or a set of behaviors. Previous studies of the implementation process of market orientation are examined from the cultural perspective, whereas little research exists from the behavioral perspective. Market orientation defined from the behavioral perspective consists of three stages; (1) generation, (2) dissemination of market intelligence, and (3) responsiveness to it. However, it is not discussed sufficiently that how firms behave in the “actual” business process of market orientation. This study aims to explore the implementation process of market orientation in a new business development context from the behavioral perspective. We use the Activity-Resource-Actor (ARA) model as research framework and adopt a multiple-case study design; three Japanese apparel SMEs are analyzed. This study concludes that (1) market intelligence on networks as well as market intelligence on customer needs is generated in the process of market orientation. Market intelligence on networks means that actors in the companies recognized where they can find appropriate partners to develop new businesses. Companies assume to establish new relationships with partners based on this intelligence. (2) These forms of market intelligence are utilized in the main and derived process of market orientation. The main process starts producing an idea of a new business, based on the various resources: not only on market intelligence on customer needs, but also internal or external resources. The derived process is, on the other hand, from generating market intelligence on networks to developing new relationships with partners and acquiring new resources for new business. Finally, the contributions and limitation of this study are discussed.

Keywords; market orientation, implementation process, new business development, market intelligence, ARA (Activity-Resource-Actor) model

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## INTRODUCTION

Market orientation has been a focal construct in the marketing literature during the past two and a half decades. These studies provide important insights into theoretical and managerial implications, but they cannot offer enough insights into the dynamics or processes of market orientation that firms implemented in actual business contexts.

Many studies pointed out that market orientation was understood as a culture or a set of behaviors (e.g., Narver and Slater, 1990; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Homburg and Pflesser, 2000; Hult et al., 2005). Previous studies mainly discussed the implementation process of market orientation based on the cultural perspective of market orientation (e.g., Gebhardt et al., 2006; Beverland & Lindgreen, 2007). In these studies, the implementation process of market orientation means the changing process of cultural values or beliefs that employees shared.

On the other hand, little research exists from the behavioral perspective. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) defined market orientation as a set of behaviors, and showed market orientation consisted of three stages; (1) generation, (2) dissemination of market intelligence, and (3) responsiveness to it. However, it is not discussed sufficiently that how firms behave in the actual business processes of market orientation. In other words, there is enough room to explore what market intelligence is generated and how it is utilized in the process of market orientation.

This study aims to explore the implementation process of SMEs' market orientation in a new business development from the behavioral perspective, using multiple-case study of SMEs in Japan. It has two focus points. Firstly, we analyze the market oriented process of a new business development, which is significant for firms and affects the prosperity or survival of the business. Secondly, we select the cases of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The process of market orientation, in which market intelligence is generated and disseminated in organizations, and then, responded to, would be complex and difficult to grasp. Thus, we focus on the SEMs because their information systems are relatively simple (e.g., Smeltzer et al., 1998).

The remainder of this paper is arranged as follows. We'll begin with a literature review on the implementation process of market orientation and provide a theoretical framework for analyzing case studies. Following this, we'll discuss the research approach employed in the study. The case studies are analyzed and discussed in the next section. Finally, we discuss the contributions this paper can make to this field of study and also discuss its limitations.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW OF MARKET ORIENTATION AND ITS PROCESS

As mentioned above, some researches about the implementation process of market orientation exist. The feature of these researches is that they adopt the perspective of market orientation as a culture, where they examined how cultural values or beliefs created, or changed from others. For example, Gebhardt et al (2006) explored the process to create a culture of market orientation by studying a group of firms over time. They revealed a four stage of organizational change: initiation, reconstitution, institutionalization, and maintenance.

Beverland and Lindgreen (2007) also address the process of moving the firm towards a new set of values as market orientation. It proposed the three-stage process model; unfreezing, movement and refreezing based on the model of organizational change.

From the perspective of a set of behaviors, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) defined “market orientation is the organizationwide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organizationwide responsiveness to it.” (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990, p.6). In this definition, market orientation consists of three stages; (1) generation, (2) dissemination of market intelligence, and (3) responsiveness to it.

One question of a market oriented process from the behavioral perspective is that how firms behave in the context of “actual” business process. More specifically, the content and method for utilization of market intelligence are not clear. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) pointed out that market intelligence is a broader concept that includes not only customer needs, but also exogenous market factors which affect customer needs and preferences. However, in the context of actual business situation, all of such intelligence is not significant, and the method of using them is different depending on the situations.

Thus, we can address two research questions. (1) In the market oriented process of SMEs’ new business development, what market intelligence is generated? (2) How this market intelligence is utilized?

These questions are meaningful for a deeper understanding of the relationship between market orientation and organizational performance. Many researchers posit that market orientation has a positive relationship with organization performance. For example, Kirca, et al. (2005) made a meta-analytic review for assessment of antecedents and impact of market orientation on performance. Furthermore, the empirical researches of market orientation for medium-sized enterprises(SMEs) provided similar results with large firms ones, although the research accumulation is much less compared to that of large firms (e.g. Pelham, 2000; Frans and Mewulenberg, 2004; Kara et al., 2005).

Hult et al. (2005) pointed out that cultural elements would be significant for encouraging employees to act on knowledge about customer needs. However, organizational performance would not be achieved through cultural elements, but responsiveness to market intelligence and better serving customers. This study presents that what process of market orientation is leading to organizational performance, selecting and analyzing the cases of new business developments with high performance. It means that this study clarifies the process of market orientation with high performance from the behavioral perspective of market orientation.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Studies at the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) School serve as a useful framework for analyzing the implementation process of SMEs’ market orientation from the behavioral perspective.

ARA (The Activity-Resource-Actor) model, a core model of the IMP school, considers that

business entities in a business network are united via three layers, namely, Activity, Resource, and Actor (Håkansson and Johanson 1992, Håkansson & Snehota 1995, Håkansson et al, 2010). Håkansson and Johanson (1992) defined them as “Actors are defined as those who perform activities and/or control resources. In activities actors use certain resources to change other resources in various ways. Resources are means used by actors when they perform activities.” (p.28)

The resources, which are influenced by interactions, can be roughly categorized into four types in ARA model (Håkansson and Waluszewski 2002). These include product, product facilities, organizational units and organizational relationships. Here, market intelligence, a topic of discussion for market orientation is partially treated as organizational resources units that include the knowledge and experiences accumulated by an individual or group, and combined skills with specified resources. Organizational relationships involve the routines and procedures that both parties practice. The market intelligence gathered by an organizational unit therefore reflects in the corporate behavior and influences products and product facilities. Such influences ultimately affect organizational relationship routines and procedures; a series of processes are assumed.

Table 1 shows the framework for analysis, combining the concept of market orientation with ARA model. The process of market orientation, a vertical axis, consists of three stages; generation, dissemination and responsiveness of market intelligence, based on the definition by Kohli and Jaworski (1990). A horizontal axis is constructed by the elements of ARA model; resource, activity and actor.

Table 1: Framework for analysis: Market orientation and ARA model

	Activity	Resource	Actor
<b>Generation</b>	What activities were done? -To interact with customers or gather market information to generate market intelligence -To recognize new market intelligence -To create procedures with customers	What resource (market intelligence) was developed? -Intelligence on ideal product or service -Intelligence on procedures with customers	Who did the activities?
<b>Dissemination</b>	What activities were done? -To disseminate market intelligence within organizations	What resource (market intelligence) was developed? -Intelligence on the way of disseminating market intelligence	Who did the activities?
<b>Responsiveness</b>	What activities were done? -To develop ideal products -To develop relationships with new partners -To make investments	What resource was developed? -Finished products -New relationships -New facilities	Who did the activities?

In view of 4 resource types, - product, product facilities, organizational units and organizational relationships -, it can be assumed that some resource creates at each stage. Furthermore, this resource requires some activities to create it. For example, certain SME

creates intelligence on ideal products or services as resource, and interacts with customers or gathers market information in order to create them.

There are two reasons to analyze market oriented SMEs from the perspective of ARA model. Firstly, it enables to examine the resource and actor aspects as well as activity aspects of market oriented SMEs. Current focus of market orientation researches is on behaviors or activities although market orientation was first discussed as an organizational mind-set or culture (Renko et al. 2009). ARA model, however, additionally provides the perspective of resource and actor, and of the connections between three aspects.

Secondly, from ARA model, we can analyze interactions with suppliers or partners, which cooperate with the focus SMEs to realize their customer needs. Current market orientation scales mostly measure behaviors or actions toward customers or competitors. However, SMEs need to take actions to other players; especially suppliers or partners, which provide raw material or parts etc., in order to implement market orientation.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

The purpose of this research is to examine how market oriented SMEs produce good performance. Yin (2008) stated that when "how" and "why" question is being asked, it is appropriate to adopt a case-study approach. This research presents three cases from Japanese SMEs and analyzes the processes of new business developments.

Case-study companies were selected on the basis of a purposeful sampling (Patton 2001). The goal of this sampling is to focus on the research question, which is to examine the process of developing new businesses based on a behavioral pattern for market orientation.

We selected cases from apparel industry in Japan. Apparel industry used to be one of a leading industry in Japan, but it has declined for a long time with the rise of products from some East Asian countries, especially China (Komiya et al., 2010). A lot of Japanese apparel companies have had a high motivation to develop new businesses under severe market conditions. There is a high probability of selecting suitable cases from them.

In the process of selecting cases, we use a participant list of "Japan Creation 2014". "Japan Creation" is one of the most famous apparel exhibitions in Japan. We searched participant companies with the database of "Seni-News (newspaper of textile industry)" in order to check if they developed new businesses. Furthermore, we asked some specialists of apparel industry to introduce some companies that developed successful new businesses. As a result, we selected 7 companies as candidates for researches.

Interviews to these companies were carried out from February in 2014 to March in 2015. Every interviewee is the representatives of the companies, and fairly familiar with new businesses. Questions of the interviews are developed from theoretical framework, and they were composed of structured and open-ended questions. Structured questions include the background information of the companies, such as the history of the company, their main products/services and annual turnover, etc. Open-ended questions mainly focused on the stories of new business development. Furthermore, interviewees were asked to fill in the

questionnaire on market orientation. This questionnaire is the scale of Renko et al. (2009), which proposed the scale of market orientation for SMEs

After these researches, we examined research contents, and selected three case companies in this study. Other four companies are excluded by reason of 1) a business isn't new, 2) a new business isn't growing continuously, and 3) a level of market orientation isn't high. Table 2 shows a fieldwork log.

Table2: Fieldwork log

Organization	Date	Type	Place of job title	Duration(min)
Company A	05/23/2014	interview	Executive managing director	102
Company B	09/30/2014	interview	President	134
Company C	02/03/2015	interview	President	120

We analyzed our data by using MAXQDA, version 11. Each case is analyzed independently at first, where it is examined how companies developed their new businesses and what resource are developed, what activities are done to generate these resource and who did these activities. After that, each case is compared to identify patterns shared across cases (Yin 2009).

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

### Company's profiles

Table 3 presents the company profiles for this case study analysis: Company A, B and C.

Table3: Company profiles

Organization	Business Description	Foundation	Number of Employees	Turnover
Company A	Manufacturing/wholesale of textile (Obi/Kijaku) utilized for traditional Japanese kimono	1688	49	1.5billion yen
Company B	Leasing uniforms for business companies	1973	308	3.3billion yen
Company C	Manufacturing high-density textile for marine sports and fashion	1948	53	2.1billion yen

Company A was founded in 1688, producing and wholesaling kimono textiles, a traditional Japanese garment. The company is located in Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan and has been supplying bespoke kimonos to high-end residents from the region. Business units are categorized into a wholesale department, which sells kimonos to retailers, and a manufacturing department, producing obi (sash) and silk bolts called kijaku specifically for

kimonos.

Company B was found in 1973, and got started with the cleaning business in Kurashiki-city, Okayama. In 1990, the company launched a new business that supplies services to control uniforms of customer companies. Companies whose employees wear uniforms have routines to supply uniforms for all employees, to clean and repair them and to stock extra ones for new hires. All of these tasks can outsource to Company B. Company B controls customers' uniforms by "cloth tags with bar-code" and computers, which system was issued a patent.

Company C was found in 1948. It manufactured textile mainly used for a yacht, windsurfing or paraglider. In these activities, players have to catch the wind in the sail, thus high-density of textile is crucially important. Company C has accumulated technologies to weave high-density textile. In 1990s, Company C explored opportunities to sell its high-density textile to fashion companies, such as lady's coat, skirt and sports jacket etc., cooperating with dying or sewing companies. Currently, Company C exports their high-density textile for fashion to a lot of companies around the world.

Table 4: Scores of market orientation

	Generation	Dissemination	Responsiveness	Market orientation: total score
Company A	4.09	3.22	4.27	3.93
Company B	4.00	3.78	3.87	3.89
Company C	4.00	3.89	3.47	3.79

The level of Market orientation measured by the scale of Renko et al. (2009)

Table 4 presents the level of market orientation of case companies. They are measured by the scale of Renko et al. (2009), which proposed the scale of market orientation for SMEs. The mean of market orientation that Renko et al. (2009) showed is 3.79. The scores of Company A and B (3.93 and 3.89) exceed 3.79, thus both companies can be treated as market oriented companies. On the other hand, the Company C's score is the same as the means of Renko et al. (2009)'s. Its scores of generation and dissemination of market intelligence are sufficiently high (4.00 and 3.89), whereas its responsiveness's isn't high (3.47). In this study, we regard Company C as a market oriented company, considering its responsiveness's score is not high.

#### Activities in the process of new business development

Table 5 presents the result of case-analysis from the perspective of ARA model. Firstly, we focus on activities that case companies conducted in the process of launching new businesses.

Table 5: Results of case-analysis from the perspective of ARA model

	Activity	Resource	Actor
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participating in overseas textile exhibitions</li> <li>-Meeting with the main customer(architect) and recognizing the customer needs</li> <li>-Recognizing the problem about new products: width of textile</li> <li>-Developing facility for weaving the wide textile, cooperating with neighboring firms</li> <li>-Receiving subsidy from the government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Market intelligence on customer needs: textile of high-quality texture</li> <li>-Market intelligence on networks: relationships for developing a new weaving machine</li> <li>-New relationships with partners</li> <li>-New facility: new weaving machine to weave wide-width textile</li> <li>-New products: wide-width textiles designed for luxury-brand store interiors</li> </ul>	Executive manager
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Visiting customers and recognizing the new customer needs</li> <li>-Finding out the parts that developed the new business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Market intelligence on customer needs: customers require to control their uniforms</li> <li>-Market intelligence on networks: new relationships for developing uniform with "cloth tags with bar-code"</li> <li>-New relationships with partners</li> <li>-New business parts: uniform with cloth bar-code tag</li> <li>-New business system: system of providing service to control customer's uniforms</li> </ul>	President
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hitting upon the idea of different use: from use for sport to use for fashion</li> <li>-Assessing the response of new product idea to the customer and recognizing the problem about new products</li> <li>-Developing new textile for fashion products with the dying company</li> <li>-Developing marketing networks for fashion products (designers, sewing company etc.) with the assistance from the government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Internal intelligence on a new product: fashion product</li> <li>-Market intelligence on customer needs</li> <li>-Market intelligence on networks: developing new products and business system</li> <li>-New relationships with partners</li> <li>-New products: textiles for fashion</li> <li>-New resource for marketing: new brand, channel, promotion skills and opportunities, etc.</li> </ul>	President

Company A had participated overseas textile exhibitions to explore new markets of kimono textile. However, they couldn't understand what overseas customers expected for their products. After 4 years have passed since Company A started to attend them, they received a high reputation from a well-known architect at the exhibition in New York, who designed for luxury-brand store interiors. He showed a keen interest in high-quality texture of kimono.

We believed that we had to promote Japanese design of kimono up to that time. However it isn't necessary for him at all. On the other hand, our texture or weaving technology is one of the best in the world. He said that he didn't need the textile design, but quality of texture and weaving technology were wonderful (Executive manager of Company A)

Company A had ability to produce products that fulfill the requested quality. However, there was one problem, which is the width of textile. Company A mainly had produced obi (sash) specifically for kimonos, whose width was 70cm at most. However, customers required 150cm of textile. Company A had to develop new facilities to weave wide-width textile. Company A explored partners in the neighborhood (Company A exists in the cluster of kimono companies) to help developing a new weaving machine and invest it. Finally a new weaving machine for wide-width textile was completed, and this business is steadily growing.

Company B started clothes cleaning business in 1973 and expanded its business to the



selling uniform to business companies. When running their business, they had opportunities to see customers' workplaces. Some companies had disorganized stocks of their uniforms. Companies whose employees wear uniforms have to supply uniforms to all employees, and stock certain amount of uniforms for new hires. In addition to that, they have to clean, repair and recycle them. Company B understood their needs to outsource to control uniforms.

When we sold uniforms to the customers, we could see the excesses of uniforms at their workplaces. I thought we were able to manage them and it became a new business. (President of Company B)

In 1990, the company launched a uniform leasing business, which includes leasing, delivering, cleaning, controlling, repairing, and recycling uniforms to the customers.

The issue that Company B had to deal with was how to control customers' uniforms. Company B had an idea of controlling them with a bar-code, but a bar-code made from paper didn't work well. The president of Company B looked for other types of bar-code and finally found a bar-code made from cloth. Company B made contact with a domestic business agent of that product although an English company had its patent. A "cloth tag with bar-code" and the relationship with the business agent resolved the issue of controlling customers' uniforms.

Company C started its business as an affiliate of big textile company. It produced high-density textile used for a yacht, windsurfing or paraglider. In the early 1990s, Company C made a vast investment for producing textile for a paraglider, based on the government future forecast of number of doing paraglider. However it fell extremely short, thus Company C had to search new markets. President of Company C thought that high-density textile would be used for a sports cloth, such as sports jacket, or sky pants. Company C made its first attempt to do a business without an instruction of the affiliate company. Sales for sports clothes had modest success, but soon sales became decreasing because textiles are not for sports cloth use. Next, president of Company C focused on lady's fashion, for example lady's coats or skirts. He asked people in the fashion industry if their textile could be used for fashion items and received positive responses from them. But they needed to improve texture of textile for fashion use.

If our textile can be used for sports item, it also would be used for fashion item, I thought. I asked old friends if this textile could be used for fashion. He answered "it fits a trend" But customers of fashion item requested better texture for fashion. (President of Company C)

Company C got start to develop textiles for lady's fashion use, cooperating with a certain dying company. Some employee in Company C had experience to work at a dying company, thus product development had smoothly expanded. After that, one person who belonged to a local industrial association proposed to launch a new fashion brand with a designer, sewing

and dying companies because they would get subsidy from government if it collaborated with some local firms and conducted a new business. This subsidy accelerated Company C's product development of textiles for fashion use.

#### Comparing the cases from the perspective of resource

Secondly, we compare the cases from the perspective of resource. In all cases, a certain person made decisions about resources; executive manager in Company A and presidents in Company B and C.

As can be seen from Table 5, three companies generated and used the market intelligence on customer needs in the process of new business development. However, there is difference in the way of using it between Company A, B and C. Company A and B launched their new businesses based on the intelligence on customer needs. Company A expanded to manufacture textiles for shop interiors after recognizing customer's good reputation for quality of texture. Company B saw disorganized uniforms at customers' workplaces and started their leasing uniform business.

On the other hand, a starting point of Company C's new business was an original idea by its president. He had an idea of selling the textile for fashion use, and tested his ideas with experts of the fashion industry, which means that he used the intelligence on customer needs to check the demand of its textile for a fashion use.

A lot of previous studies pointed out that a new business doesn't always start at the customer needs. Starting points of new businesses are internal or external resources, for example new technology of another company, as well as customer needs. President of Company C said as follows.

We have a strong commitment to "product out" if we can't find customer needs. At that time, we try to make products that can't be found in the world. Thus, it takes long time for most of our products to start demanding. (President of Company C)

However, market intelligence on customer needs has to be generated even if a new business doesn't start at the recognition of customer needs because this intelligence use for testing their demand of products. In the case of Company C, president asked some experts to check the demand of new products. Company C gathers information on customer needs, but doesn't make decisions based on it only. This tendency of Company C reflects the scores of market orientation: score of generation is high, whereas the score of responsiveness isn't high (Table 4).

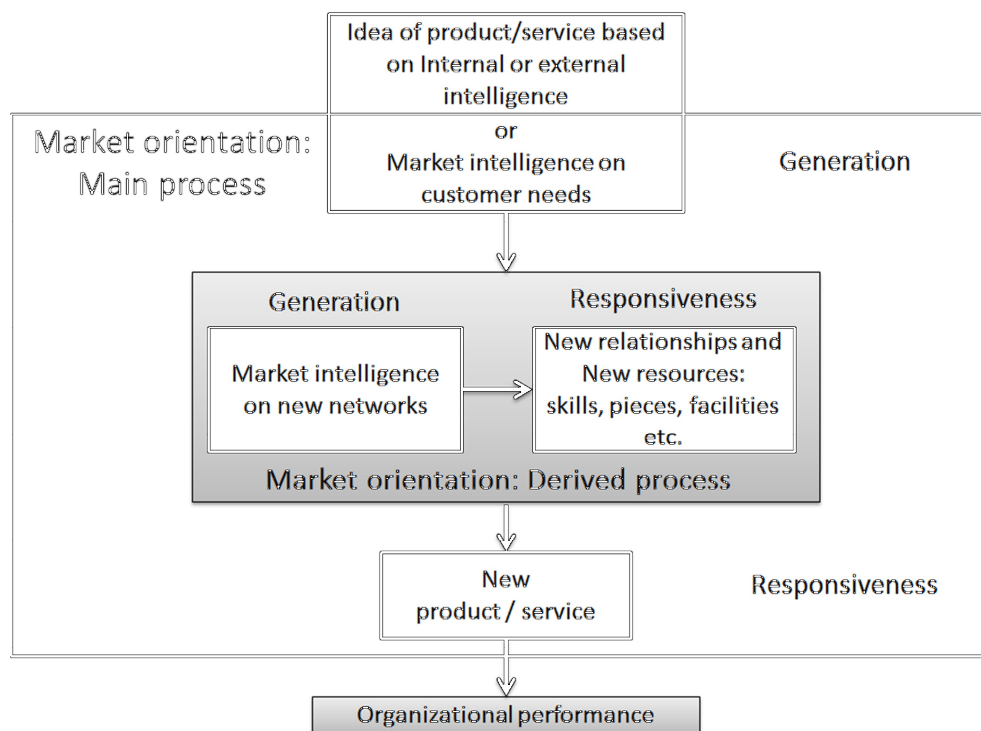
Table 5 shows case companies created other forms of resource in common: market intelligence on networks and relationships with partners. Market intelligence on networks means that actors in the companies recognized where they can find appropriate partners to develop new businesses. Based on this intelligence, companies assume to establish relationships with partners.

Three case companies had to cooperate with other companies to develop new businesses. Company A cooperated with the neighborhood companies to develop facilities for weaving wide-width textile. Company B made contact with a domestic business agent of cloth tag with bar-code. Company C developed textiles for fashion use, cooperating with a certain dying company and launch a new fashion brand with a designer, sewing and dying companies. In the most case of new business developments of SEMs, companies have to cooperate with partners because SMEs don't have much resource. Thus, SMEs have to generate intelligence on networks and collaborate with other companies to realize the idea of new businesses. Intelligence on networks is strongly related to the markets, thus should be include in the concept of market intelligence although the previous studies don't pay much attention to it.

#### Resource flow of market orientation process

Finally, we examine the resource flow in the process of market orientation; generation, dissemination, and responsiveness of market intelligence (Figure 1). However, at a dissemination stage, there aren't any activities that need to be considered. A handful of executive members of Company A uneventfully shared market intelligence. In a Company B and C, the presidents only have market intelligence. It is not difficult or necessary for SMEs to disseminate market intelligence among organizational members. Thus, Figure 1 is constructed only by generation and responsiveness stages.

Figure 1: Resource flow in the market orientation process



Resource flow consists of two process; main and derived process. The main process starts producing an idea of a new business. This process is based on the various resources: not only

on market intelligence on customer needs, but also internal or external resources. As discussed above, market intelligence on customer needs is generated and used for testing the demand of new businesses even if new ideas are developed based on the resource except market intelligence on customer needs. This process forms the basis of market orientation, and provides a product/ service to meet customer needs.

On the other hand, in the process of developing a new business, the derived process exists. The derived process is from generating market intelligence on networks (generation) to developing new relationship with partners and acquiring new resources (responsiveness). Three case-studied companies needed to establish new relationships and develop new resources to realize new products or services. These relationships and resources were crucial for successes of new businesses. It is important for high organizational performance to complete the derived process as well as the main one.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the implementation process of SMEs' market orientation in a new business development and examine in detail what market intelligence is generated and how it is utilized in the process of a new business that market oriented SMEs developed. Case-study illustrated that 1) there are two market intelligence are generated; market intelligence on customer needs and networks. 2) These forms of market intelligence are utilized in the main and derived process of market orientation. It would be important for high organizational performance to complete the derived process as well as the main one.

This study offers three contributions to theory. Firstly, this study reveals existence of market intelligence on networks and it is utilized in the derived process of market orientation. Secondly, we point out that it is important for the success of new businesses to complete the derived process as well as the main one. These points offer important insights for the future research of market orientation. Finally, this study examines market orientation of SMEs from an IMP viewpoint. There are many studies on market orientation, but few discussions from an IMP approach. This study reveals that ARA model provides a fruitful perspective to the studies of market orientation.

On the other hand, the discussion in this study is based on empirical research in a certain industry; apparel industry in Japan. Results in this study require further investigations. It is worth conducting additional case studies including SMEs in other industries or countries.

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