

# The Influence of Segmentation Variables on the Level of Market Orientation

Author: Niklas Bierfischer  
University of Twente  
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede  
The Netherlands

## ABSTRACT

The influence of segmentation variables on the level of market orientation is still a relationship which lacks research. It is assumed that segmentation variables, which require a generation of market information, have a positive effect on the level of market orientation. This study contributes to a better understanding of the previously stated relationship and assumption by conducting semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The interviews identify the applied segmentation variables within the B2B companies. The questionnaires' aim is to determine the level of market orientation of the companies, and thus enable a comparison of segmentation variables and the resulting market orientation score. A classification model is introduced, consisting of the macro, micro and social dimension, which illustrates as well as classifies the applied segmentation variables of the interviewed companies.

The interview results show that the companies have several segmentation variables implemented that are spread over several dimensions. Furthermore, the questionnaire identified a high average market orientation score for the interviewed companies. The study reveals a positive trend of the use of multiple segmentation variables from multiple dimensions on the level of market orientation.

## Graduation Committee members:

**Dr. Raymond P.A. Loohuis**

**Prof. Dr. Holger Schiele**

## Keywords

Segmentation Variables, Level of Market Orientation, Influence of Segmentation Variables on the Market Orientation, Business-to-Business Market Segmentation

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*11<sup>th</sup> IBA Bachelor Thesis Conference*, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, Enschede, The Netherlands.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Many companies are segmenting potential customers into groups, because it ensures that the marketing activities are aligned within the different customer groups (Baines et al., 2013). The underlying logic for a market segmentation is to form groups, in which customers with heterogeneous product preferences and buying behaviour have homogeneous characteristics (Dibb and Simkin, 2001). After the formation of groups, companies can better promote the right product or service for the identified segment and thus gain competitive advantage. Furthermore, it is possible to assume that segmentation has a positive effect on the understanding of the market, because the usage of segmentation variables requires information about a segment of the market. Jaworski and Kohli use the concept of *market orientation* as a conceptual framework for detailing the understanding of the market. Many researchers identified a positive relationship between the level of market orientation and a company's performance (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Han et al., 1998; Narver and Slater, 1990). Although the concept of market orientation has strong significance, there is no literature about the influence of segmentation variables on a company's level of market orientation. Still, both concepts have the approach of gathering information to know more about the customer. While market segmentation takes a very analytical data driven approach of gathering data, the marketing orientation concept has a broader and more qualitative approach.

Generally, there is little research about segmentation variables and their influence. Moreover, it is not clear which variables or set of variables are important or more effective. In addition, research about business-to-business segmentation is less extensive than the research of the customer segmentation (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984). Some researchers suggest variables for the segmentation of B2B markets and create models for the segmentation (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984; Wind and Cardozo, 1974), but they do not value or explain the consequences of choosing these variables.

Due to this lack in theory, the paper investigates on the research question:

**What is the influence of segmentation variables on the level of market orientation in the business-to-business market?**

Sub questions that need to be answered are:

Which variables are considered important for the segmentation of B2B markets?

What is the concept of market orientation?

The objective of this study is to identify to what extent variables have an impact on the level of market orientation and in which situations these variables contribute to the process of segmentation. Furthermore, this paper adds value to the research field and to businesses, as it provides a new classification model for segmentation variables.

In this paper, the two most contributing and accepted B2B segmentation models, the *Nested approach* by Bonoma and Shapiro (1984) and the *Ideal Segmentation model* by Wind and Cardozo (1974), are reviewed. In addition to the macro and micro dimensions of these models, it is important for this paper to also include a third, social dimension. Therefore, a classification model consisting of three dimension is

created. Following this, the concept of market orientation by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) is explained.

The data for this study are obtained from a qualitative study, which consists of semi-structured interviews, and a questionnaire. The interviewed companies are operating in the business-to-business market, however differ in their size and their markets. The semi-structured interview contains questions concerning the variables, which are used for the market segmentation, and questions about the treatment of preferred customers. Lastly, a questionnaire by Jaworski and Kohli identifies the level of market orientation.

The paper is structured in six sections. Following the introduction section is the literature review, which starts with the explanation of the two business models of Bonoma & Shapiro (1984) and Wind & Cardozo (1974). The second part of the literature review illustrates a classification model. The last part of the literature is about the concept of market orientation and the questionnaire by Jaworski and Kohli (1993), which allows to determine the level of market orientation.

On basis of the theory, interview questions are constructed and asked to five different companies. The data section includes the outcomes of each individual interviewee, which is analyzed and illustrated in the new model. In the following, findings are explained and discussed and limitations are mentioned. The final section consists of a short conclusion and recommendation of the study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Market Segmentation

The market consists of many heterogeneous customers. In general, there is the assumption that it is not possible to constantly satisfy all these customers (Choffray and Lilien, 1978).

Market segmentation aims at grouping some of these customers, who have the same characteristics and needs. This gives the advantage of having customers reacting similarly on marketing activities and thus be able to better predict their responses to marketing stimuli. Additionally, market segmentation helps to understand the customers and leads to an effective assessment of the potential of different segments and the resources needed to serve it (Yankelovich, 1964).

Despite the acknowledged value of an effective business-to-business segmentation, not many instrumental and guiding market segmentation models exist. The lack in theory might be one reason, why many companies have an ad hoc approach to market segmentation (Dibb and Simkin, 1994).

The segmentation models *Nested approach* by Bonoma and Shapiro (1984) and the *Ideal Segmentation model* by Wind and Cardozo (1974) are two accepted tools for simplifying the segmentation process. The most important similarity of the models is the approach of starting the segmentation with macro variables, which is followed by the application of micro variables. The macro variables are used for a broad market segmentation, the micro variables however, focus on a detailed segmentation. Macro information is company related, but does not concern the business of the company directly. It is considered less valuable than micro information and the easiest to gather, often from secondary data (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984; Wind and Cardozo 1974). The macro segmentation is a cheap and standardisable method (Wind

and Cardozo, 1974) that allows to exclude uninterested customers and thus ensures better resource allocation. Micro information is about the direct business of a company and about detailed and personal information such as the characteristics of the customer. Due to the specificity of this information, it requires more research but is also classified as more valuable. The business related information helps to predict the future demand and the characteristics related information enables a prediction of behaviour. Both contribute to an effective planning of resources and thus give competitive advantage.

The papers stress that with the increasing specificity of the variables the value of the resulting information is increasing at the same time. Nevertheless, they put emphasize on the need of balancing specific and broad variables, because the specific factors can be too time-consuming and costly (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984). In addition, the importance of variables for each company is partly dependent on the companies' strategy (Wind and Cardozo, 1974).

### 2.1.1 The Nested Approach by Bonoma and Shapiro (1984)

Bonoma and Shapiro created a segmentation process, called the *Nested Approach*, which involves a hierarchy of five different segmentation criteria with several sub-variables. The process moves along the hierarchy from a broad macro dimension to a more detailed micro dimension. The more detailed the information gets, the more valuable it is.

The first criteria is *Demographics*, which includes the variables customers' industry, size and location. Segmenting according to the industry often helps to find customer with the same service or product needs. The size of a company affects other variables such as smaller companies have a smaller demand. Location is a very important determinant for companies that rely on specific temperatures or terrain such as a petrol company.

Next in the hierarchy is the *Operating Variable* which is mainly comprised of the variables company technology and product and brand-use status. To know a customer's technology and brand-use can be useful, because it can determine the buying needs. Companies that sell software will be more effective in segmenting potential customers by approaching companies which have the needed hardware for it.

The third criteria is the *Purchasing Approach*. An important sub-variable is the buyer-seller relationship. The buyer-seller relationship varies in importance to companies because some view the buyer as just a customer and others try to become partners. Companies following a transactional business model are interested in selling a high quantity of products or services. Companies following a relational business model would maybe prefer customers that buy less products per year, but for a longer period. The importance of the buyer-seller relationship can be explained due to the close connection to the companies' strategy. If the company aims at producing a high quantity for a low price, the preferred customer would be different than for a company that produces less products with a higher price.

The fourth criteria, the *Situational Factors*, is based on temporary and detailed knowledge. These factors include urgency of order fulfilment, product application and the size of the order. All of these variables help to understand specific situations or even forecast them, resulting in a more effective allocation of resources.

The last and most detailed criteria in the *Nested Approach* is the *Buyer's Personal Characteristics*. The behaviour of the customer is important, because it consists of many aspects such as how agreeable or risk taking the customer is. By knowing these characteristics, a company can predict future behaviour and thus plan accordingly.

When the available data is gathered, the company "can weigh [the] segmentation approaches" (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984, p.7), by performing simple cost-benefit analysis.

### 2.1.2 The "Ideal" Segmentation Model by Wind and Cardozo (1974)

Wind and Cardozo describe in their research *Industrial Market Segmentation* (1974) a model which concentrates on the creation and analysis of macrosegments and the further separation into microsegments. If companies within macrosegments react in the same way to market stimuli, there is no need to further segment. If companies are reacting differently to market stimuli, the needs can be further grouped by performing a micro segmentation.

The purpose of the macro segmentation is to group customers with the same needs. The authors suggest variables, which can be also used in combination such as size and frequency of use. This segmentation could help to plan potential sales of customers. Generally, the macro segmentation is broad, but helps to screen.

Subsequently, micro segments can be created on the basis of more detailed information about the decision-making unit. One suggested variable is the perceived importance of purchase. Some companies consider a purchased product as very important and thus expect a quick delivery and good technical support.

After the macro segmentation or at latest after the micro segmentation, the authors expect a segment that reacts similar to marketing efforts. The difficulty of segmenting customers is the selection of appropriate variables. In addition, it is recommended to review the segmentation strategy periodically, because the customer needs are constantly changing.

## 2.2 Creation of a Classification Model For Segmentation Variables

The classification of variables is based on three dimensions. The macro and micro dimensions follow the approach of the two previously described models of *Bonoma and Shapiro (1984)* and *Wind and Cardozo (1974)*.

In addition a third social dimension is introduced to reflect the importance of personal information. Already Bonoma and Shapiro remarked the value of gathering personal information on your business partner in their research *How to Segment Industrial markets* from 1984. Schiele identified a trend that companies shift business responsibilities to suppliers and decrease the overall number of suppliers in many markets (Schiele et al., 2012). Due to Schiele's findings, the necessity of knowing your business partner is further stressed and underlines the importance of having a distinct social dimension. The social dimension contains variables that concern the business partner or contact person.

### 2.2.1 The Macro-Dimension

The macro dimension includes variables that are easily identifiable for companies and contribute to a broad segmentation of the market. Variables that are considered essential for the macro dimension are the companies' size, geographic location and the industry (Baines et al., 2013; Wind and Cardozo, 1974; Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984). The size of a company can indicate a possible volume demand and usage rate of the offered product, and can therefore determine the value of the segmenting organisation (Baines et al., 2013). Typically, the size of an organization can be determined based on data on revenue or number of employees. The geographic location as well as industry type are helpful in categorizing customers, because these customers often have similar needs, which results in a more effective resource allocation (Baines et al., 2013). Depending on the industry, the categorisation by location is less useful for many companies, because the Internet enables an increasing amount of distribution channels and an increase in possibilities of exchanging products and services (Baines et al., 2013). A common method to segment the industry types and their economic performance is by using Standard industrial classifications (SIC) codes, yet application is limited due to broad classifications by the SIC codes (Baines et al., 2013). In addition, technology can be a helpful variable to segment the market for companies that use similar technologies or have similar needs (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984).

### 2.2.2 The Micro-Dimension

The micro dimension contains variables that might change in importance according to the company's market and strategy. The variables are more detailed and concern the direct business of the company. Transferable items from the *Nested Approach* are the product and brand use, the size of order and situational factors. Similar to Bonoma and Shapiro's variable buyer-seller relationship, is the variable buying behaviour of the company. Generally, there are three distinctive buying behaviors: the straight rebuy, the modified rebuy and the purchase of a product for the first time. Straight rebuying customers are the preferred customers because the modified rebuying customers and the new customers go along with a higher risk and more resources that need to be invested to satisfy their needs (Kotler et al., 2001).

A variable that is often referred to in the literature is a company's profit margin, because it is a reliable indicator for the performance of the customer. In addition to the size of order, the frequency of order as well as the maximum budget can be important variables to segment customers (Baines et al., 2013; Wind and Cardozo, 1974). A low maximum budget and a small size of purchased goods are unattractive to selling companies, because the profit margin of this transaction will be relatively

small. The customer lifetime-value, which consists of the past profit contribution and business potential, is a method to evaluate and rank existing companies (Hwang et al., 2004). Both sub variables are included in the model.

Data for the variables such as profit margin, past profit contribution, product/brand use, frequency size of order are available through public data sources or the company's own data base. Due to the fact that the information is obtainable from secondary data, the research "is relatively cheap and can be standardized as part of the firm's marketing information system" (Wind and Cardozo, 1974, p. 157). The other variables are based on primary data, which are costly to obtain.

### 2.2.3 The Social-Dimension

The social dimension includes segmentation variables that vary with the business partner or contact person of the company. These variables are the most specific ones and consequently are more difficult to identify than variables from the micro or macro dimension. An important determinant for an effective relationship between the buyer and seller is the variable called commitment (Ford, 1980). The personality of the business partner is "difficult to identify [...] [and] expensive" (Wind and Cardozo, 1974, p. 162). Understanding the business partner and his personality can be important because not the company, but people make buying decisions. Some of those might be riskier or less risky, partly depending on the personality (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984). Especially, if a company is less transactional, but more relationship oriented, the personality and the associated behaviour is important to predict future business and the potential. On the other hand, if a company wants to simply identify needs and wants, this information would be too time consuming to collect (Freytag and Clarke, 2001, p. 486).

The phenomenon of an inverted marketing approach, by which customers strive for becoming attractive to suppliers to receive the best resources was recently explored by Schiele et al. (2012). Steinle and Schiele (2008), defined that a company "has preferred customer status with a supplier, if the supplier offers the buyer preferential resource allocation" (p. 11). Other researchers defined it as "the practice of giving selective customers elevated social status recognition and/ or additional or enhanced products and services [...]" (Lacey et al., 2007, p. 242). According to Hottenstein, many companies "have a preferred customer [...] list, which may be based on past orders or expectations of future business." (1970, p. 46). To reach the state of being a preferred customer of a supplier, Schiele et al. (2012) points out that it is a requirement to satisfy the initial suppliers' needs. A second condition, which needs to be fulfilled for becoming a preferred customer, is being considered attractive by the supplier (Schiele, 2011). When a customer fails to meet both requirements, he will not achieve the preferred customer status (Schiele, 2011). In consequence he must engage in competitive bidding practices to keep a relationship with the supplier (Dorsch et al., 1998). If the preferred customer status is reached, both parties can benefit from it, as it can result in supplier innovativeness and have a positive impact on supplier pricing behaviour (Schiele et al., 2011). The benefits of being a preferred customer can differ, such as differential pricing, dedication of best personnel, product customization or exclusive agreements (Schiele et al., 2012). The model includes three variables concerning the concept of preferred customer. The first variable "preferring customer" indicates, if the interviewed company does prefer some customers over others. The second variable "differential services" indicates, if the company offers different services to the preferred customers

and the third variable “differential prices”, if preferred customers get different prices.

### 2.2.4 The Final Model

The following Figure consists of the macro, micro and social dimension. Each dimension contains the previously assigned variables.

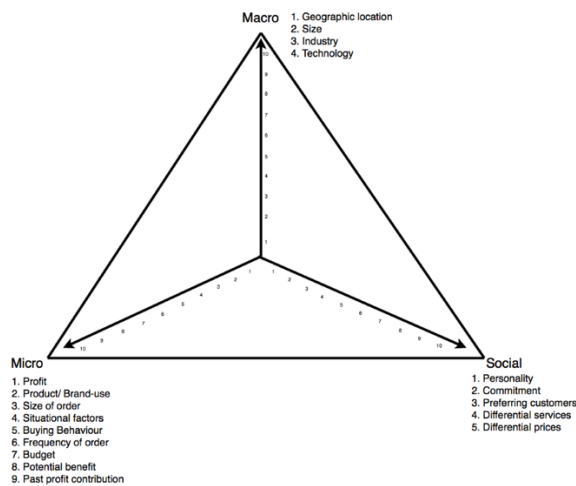


Figure 1 - Model for classification of variables

## 2.3 Market Orientation

Market orientation is a concept which is generally little researched (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). The first researchers that focused intensively on market orientation are Jaworski & Kohli and Narver & Slater. The researchers determined the high importance of market orientation by identifying a strong relationship between a company’s level of market orientation and its business performance (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Narver and Slater, 1990). Market orientation “refers to the organisation-wide generation of market intelligence, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organisation-wide responsiveness to it” (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993, p. 53). Instead of focusing on its own needs, market orientation helps to define the product from the perspective of the customer. The “intelligence generation” does not only include the expressed customer needs and preferences, but also “an analysis of exogenous factors that influence those needs and preferences” (Jaworski and Kohli, 1990, p. 4). “Intelligence dissemination” refers to what extent the different departments of the company use the intelligence and contribute to “responding effectively to [the] market” (Jaworski and Kohli, 1990, p. 5). The dissemination is important because it enables a shared basis for future actions by different departments. “Responsiveness” to market intelligence describes the actions taken in response to the generated and disseminated intelligence. According to Jaworski and Kohli (1990), all departments have

to respond “to market trend[s] in a market-oriented company” (p. 6). The responsiveness is split into response design and response implementation. Response design describes the actions and planned on basis of the gathered intelligence and response implementation is about the actual execution of plans.

The phenomenon of why some companies are more market-oriented than others is still a scarcity in theory identified by Jaworski and Kohli (1993). Some influencing factors on the level of market orientation are identified. One defined factor is the amount of attention given by managers to the level of market orientation, which is considered as a facilitator. Also, a certain level of risk-taking, interdepartmental dynamics and reward systems influence the level of market orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Kirca et al., 2005). Moreover, researchers found out that the business environment can be another influencing factor on the level of market orientation (Lusch and Laczniak, 1987).

To determine the market orientation level, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) created a questionnaire, consisting of 32 items. The first 10 items measure the intelligence generation of the company. The following 8 statements assess the dissemination of the intelligence across the departments. The last 14 statements determine the responsiveness by proposing 7 items to the response design and 7 items to the response implementation. The company is supposed to assess the proposed statements with a score from one to five; a score of one represents no compliance and a score of five implies complete compliance. The higher a company scores, the higher is its level of market orientation.

The items of the questionnaire do partly focus on the customers, which means that knowing your customer can increase the level of market orientation. Furthermore, competition, technology and regulation are forces that are included as questionnaire items and also add to the level of market orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993).

## 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

To examine the potential effect of segmentation variables on the level of market orientation, this study includes an interview as well as a questionnaire. Both data collection methods are asked to the same managers to enable a comparison of information. The interview helps to identify the used segmentation variables within the company and the questionnaire determines the level of market orientation of the company.

### 3.1 Interview

The data is obtained by executing semi structured interviews. All interviewees are managers or CEOs of companies, which operate in distinct B2B industries. The interview consists of two sets of questions: The first set of questions aims at identifying the segmentation variables that are used for the general segmentation of B2B markets. The second set of questions on the variable preferred customer contains more specific questions concerning the existing customers and their treatment. The answers of most questions are influenced by the companies’ industry and strategy, which can possibly lead to a broad range of answers.

The results of the interviews are illustrated in the classification model. The model has three axes with each 10 points for the macro, micro and social dimension. The 10 points of each axis

are divided by the number of variables per dimension. In such manner, it is possible to have a model in which the axes have the same length, but increase by a different factor. The dimensions are increasing according to the defined variables by the interviewee and the ratio of each dimension. The macro axis increases by a ratio of 2.5 points per variable (10:4), the micro axis by 1.11 points per item (10:9) and the social axis by 2 points per variable (10:5). In case of the interviewees mentioning new variables, the dimension and the according percentage by which the axis increases will be adjusted.

### 3.2 Questionnaire

In addition to the semi structured interviews, a questionnaire, which concerns the level of market orientation by Jaworski and Kohli (1993), is answered by the participants. The items are rated on basis of a five-level Likert scale, which ranges from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Several items in the scale have a reversed score structure to “minimize response set bias” (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993, p. 58). The statements focus on the market intelligence generation, the intelligence dissemination and responsiveness of the organisation. The three scores together result in the level of market orientation. The higher the respondents score is, the higher is the level of market orientation. The analysis of the scores is as follows: Companies that score below the median of 3 are considered to have low market orientation. Scores that range between 3 and 3.75 are above average and are classified as medium scores. The next classification is high scores which lie between 3.75 and 4.5. Scores above 4.5 are considered as extremely high.

## 4. DATA

### 4.1 Company A

Company A operates in the industry of kitchen appliances and has a business model with emphasize on the relationship with customers. The company focuses only on the kitchen appliance industry, but within their industry in differentiates between retailers and distributors. When the company segments the market, it starts with the geographical location. The second variable is the segmentation on basis of profit and on size, determined by the revenue. Next is the cultural fit with the customer which depends on the personality of the customer. According to the company, revenue as well as profit and the cultural fit are the most important segmentation variables. Due to the annually published studies about the market, the company segments every year. The company has preferred customers, but they are only known informally. The criteria for the informal classification are revenue, growth of revenue and a forecasted customer development. Although the company does classify some customers, these do not receive any advantages.

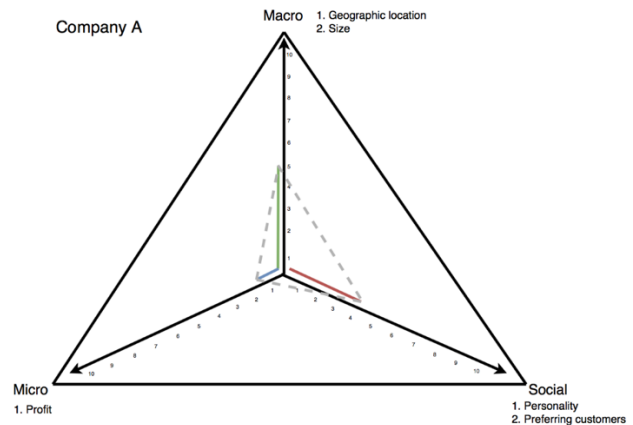


Figure 2 - Company A

According to the questionnaire responses by the company, the calculated intelligence generation score of 4.8 indicates an extremely effective gathering of market information. The dissemination of the information scores 4.13 and is categorised as high. Similarly, the response design (3.57) and the response implementation (3.86) are above 3.5 and thus can be considered as high values. The values imply that the company is especially good in gathering information and spreading it through the company. Less effective, but still good is the further planning and execution of these plans. Overall, the company’s level of market orientation is at 4.09.

### 4.2 Company B

Company B operates in the industry of refrigeration technology with a transactional business model. The company does segment industries into segments and states that they use the NOGA code for the segmentation. The code classifies the activities of many swiss companies (Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft). This segmentation variable is the second variable in the market segmentation process and follows after the first variable geographic location. The third segmentation variable is size. Company B explained that the segmentation does differ based on different industries. Often size can be effectively measured by comparing the number of employees. Sometimes, it is necessary to use an industry dependent variable such as the number of beds of a hotel, if the company operates in the hotel industry. The last segmentation variable is the potential of the customers. Loyalty the size and frequency of orders are the variables that are used for the classification of preferred customers. The customers are classified as top-customer, active customer or passive customer. Top-customers are very loyal and have a minimum order amount and frequency. Active customers are customers that buy more often than passive customers. Company B values top-customers by giving much more attention and by considering their wishes. Additionally, they get better pricing.

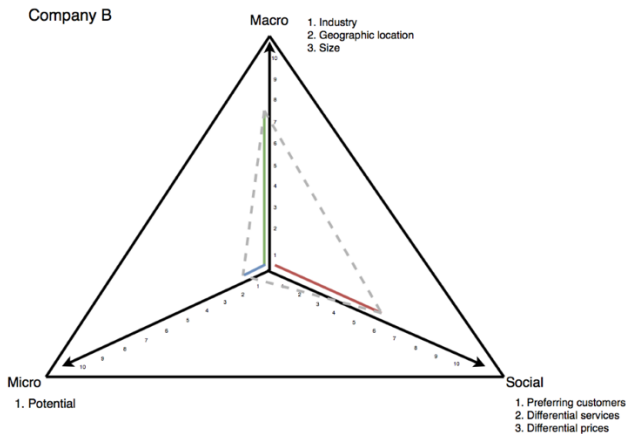


Figure 3 - Company B

The company scored on average a 3.7 for the intelligence generation. The intelligence dissemination within the company is at 3.63 and the general responsiveness at 3.22. The scores indicate that the company is better in generating and spreading intelligence within the company, than in using the gathered information. In total, the company scored a 3.44 which is a value above the average of three and thus can be considered as a medium level of market orientation.

### 4.3 Company C

Company C operates in the luxury furniture industry and wins loyalty of customers by creating a mutually valuable relationship. The company starts with the identification of brands that are used by the customers when segmenting the market. The second variable is more important for them and concerns the personality of the customer. Also the commitment is very important, as it is required for a business model concentrating on long-term relationships. The last variable is the possible selling price. Not every customer is willing to pay the same price for products, which is often reflected in a smaller budget.

After the segmentation, the company determines preferred customers on the basis of order quantity, customer competencies, the type of product that was bought and commitment. Preferred customers get more attention in form of visits, phone calls, emails and trainings. Furthermore, some of the preferred customers get price reductions.

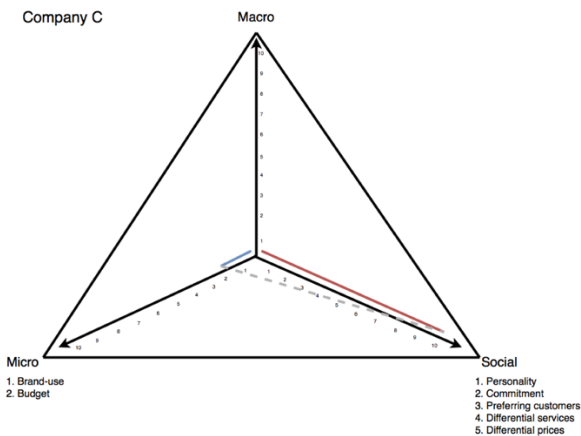


Figure 4 - Company C

Company C is effective in generating market intelligence, indicated by an average item score of 4.3. Furthermore, the dissemination score of 4.25 implies that the company is able to spread the gathered intelligence within the company. The response design and implementation are less effective than the other two processes with an average of 3.79. Consequently, the company is less effective in responding to their former actions. Nevertheless, they are clearly above the average with a mean of 4.11.

### 4.4 Company D

Company D operates in the industry of driverless transport systems. It has a transactional business model and focuses on specific sectors which are sometimes overlapping. Their segmentation is on basis of the potential of the customer and the industry, which implies a segmentation by industry. The customers vary in size and due to the fast developing and changing industry, small start-ups can become key accounts after one week. Company D is in the position that customers are asking for service, which means that Company D mostly reacts and is rarely the segmenting initiator. The company tries to segment the market annually. The company has an ABCD-classification system for preferred customers which classifies customers on the basis of the revenue gained with the customer, the frequency of order, the lifespan of projects and the potential of the customer. Company D predicts the potential of A-customers. The customers with the highest potential get more attention and more resources provided.

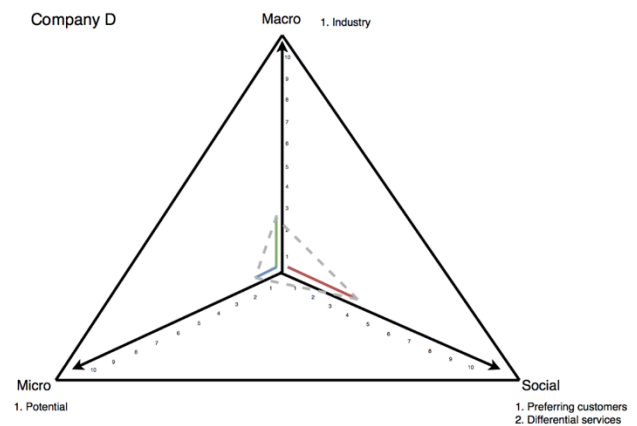


Figure 5 - Company D

Company D has an intelligence generation of 3.1 which is slightly above the median. The responsiveness of the company is estimated to be medium as the score of 3.72 is slightly below 3.75. In total the company has a medium level of market orientation, resulting from the ultimate average of 3.53.

### 4.5 Company E

Company E operates in the pharmaceutical industry. The company has up to thousand customers, which they are collaborating with and the company follows a transactional business model. The company starts the segmentation process with the location (clusters) of fast developing companies within

industries. First the industry is chosen, followed by a geographical segmentation in which a “the closer the better”-principle exists. In addition, Company E tries to find startups, which have potential and would benefit from their service by adding value. The next variable is the financial situation of the startups. The company's offerings can be classified as expensive and as startups often have financial problems and small budgets, they sometimes cannot afford the offerings. The company describes its segmentation process as continuous. Customers are classified by an ABC-system. Company E states that it usually does not make a difference in which classification group a customer is, as the company tries to serve all customers equally. Only in extreme cases, when there are production problems, the A-customers are served first.

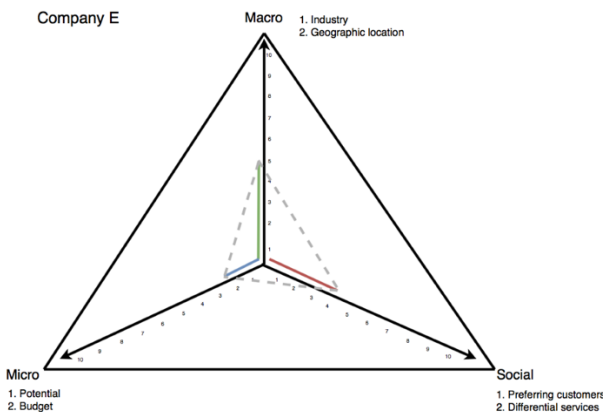


Figure 6 - Company E

Company E scored an average of 4 for the intelligence generation. The Dissemination of this intelligence is much less effective and scored 3.13, slightly above the average. The response design scored 4.86 and the response implementation 3.29. This means, that the company is extremely effective in planning and developing on basis of given intelligence, but the execution of these plans is not very effective. All in all, the company accounts a 3.82 and thus has a high level of market orientation.

#### 4.6 Summary of Data

The data of the five interviews are summarized in the following table:

Table 1 - Summary of Data

COMPANY	MACRO	MICRO	SOCIAL	TOTAL	MARKET ORIENTATION
A	2	1	2	5	4.09
B	3	1	3	7	3.44
C	-	2	7	7	4.11
D	1	1	2	4	3.53
E	2	2	2	6	3.82
AVERAGE	1.6	1.4	3.2	5.8	3.8

The data results show that every company from the sample segments their market. The companies apply several variables which add up to a total average of 5.8 variables. The companies use variables from all three dimensions, except one company that focuses only on two dimensions. The social dimension has on average twice as many variables than the other dimensions which supports the importance of the dimension. All companies have a market orientation score, which is higher than the median of three. Moreover, the companies have in total an average market orientation of 3.8. The score is above 3.75 and can consequently be classified as high.

The results of the interviews show that all companies are segmenting their markets with multiple variables in multiple dimensions. In the average almost six variables are used and almost all companies are using variables of all three dimensions macro, micro and social. Interestingly the highest number of variables is in the social dimension. This can be expected as all companies are operating in the B2B market, where personal customer relationships are important.

With regard to the market orientation the average score of 3.8 shows a high level of market orientation. Even the lowest score of 3.4 is still above the median.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

### 5.1 Discussion

Resulting from the sample of the five interviewed companies the following statement applies: these companies are segmenting their markets with multiple variables in multiple dimensions and these companies have a high market orientation score. **Therefore this supports the thesis that companies, which are using multiple variables in multiple dimensions to segment their market, have a higher market orientation.**

But, this interpretation is only indirectly possible. While the market orientation concept of Jaworski and Kohli (1993) allows to define a median, there is no median value for the number of segmenting variables that is used by all companies. The average number of 6 segmenting variables for the interviewed companies sounds high, but there is no data benchmark available.

Looking at the individual company data and comparing between the companies, there is no clear trend. The statement „the higher the number of variables, the higher the market orientation“ cannot be proven on the individual company level. Each of the companies operates in a different market. Therefore it is expected that the business specifics of each market have a high influence on segmenting variables, which consequently affects the market orientation. These business specifics can be the size of the customers, the intensity of the competition or others. The two companies with the highest market orientation score are for example operating in market that are not purely transactional, but relationship based.

Furthermore, it is not possible to draw conclusions from the individual variables or dimensions. The variance of answers is too high to assume specific trends.

For the B2B industry the social dimension seems to be very important as most companies are not in pure transactional business, but depend on good personal relationships. All



interviewed companies have realized this importance, which is reflected in the high average number of social variables, and this seems to positively influence the market orientation.

The questionnaire of Jaworski and Kohli (1993) takes a comprehensive approach in gathering information about the customer and the companies' relationships. Some items of the questionnaire directly relate to market and customer data, which are also used for customer segmentation. Others are related to information about the detailed customer interaction and relationship. Finally, there is a set of questions about the marketing strategy and activities. The customer segmentation approach through segmentation variables follows the same goal: the more you know about your customer, the better you can target your marketing activities. When building a customer segmentation model all relevant data are used from the macro, micro and social dimension to create customer clusters. So, while the market orientation questionnaire takes a more qualitative data generation approach, the customer segmentation approach is more data driven.

The positive influence is therefore not only based on the fact that partially the same data are gathered, but also on a company's mind set. Companies that have a high market orientation have a clear focus on managing all aspects of a customer relationship, companies with a detailed customer segmentation approach have a clear focus on gathering data and segmenting them to learn more about the customer.

The reason why customer segmentation has become so important recently is due to the better availability of data, especially internal company transactional data. While in 1993, when Jaworski and Kohli formulated their market orientation questionnaire, data analysis was still rudimentary, today it is an important part of any business. Technologies, systems and costs for data analysis - and also related online marketing programs - have made great strides in development and also there is more data available especially with regard to internal micro data.

Today most companies have data warehouses with access to all transactional data, but many companies have also front end data from online transactions, which tell them also more about the customer behaviour.

This increased importance of data analysis and the related segmentation variables and also online marketing programs should be reflected more in modern research on market orientation. So, for example, items concerning those new aspects of marketing should be added to the Jaworski and Kohli questionnaire.

The high use of segmentation variables from the social dimension underlines the researched importance of the social aspects by Bonoma and Shapiro (1984) and Schiele et al. (2012). Due to the high market orientation scores and the number of used social variables, the high value of the individual social variables is further stressed (Bonoma and Shapiro, 1984).

This study does not identify a clear trend between individual variables as well as dimensions and the level of market orientation. This result can be due to the many unresearched influencing factors of the segmentation variables and due to influencing factors of market orientation.

In addition to the identified trend between the use of several variables from multiple dimension and the level of market orientation, this paper also identifies more lacks in the research field. The use of segmentation variables varies according to the company's industry, size and strategy. Future studies, can identify the most used and effective segmentation variables for each industry, company size and company strategy. Furthermore,

researchers need to determine the impact of each factor on the selection of variables and the level of market orientation. In addition to the influencing factors on the segmentation variables, the influencing factors on the level market orientation lacks research. To better determine the influence of segmentation variables on the market orientation, future researchers need to ensure that each company has similar influencing factors.

## 5.2 Limitations

This study about the influence of the segmentation variables on the level of market orientation does have several limitations. One limitation is the available data set. The data set of five companies is not sufficient to make valid conclusions about resulting relationships.

In addition, it must be considered that organizations can fail to implement an effective segmentation process. Hence, even if certain segmentation variables are used, they might have not been implemented properly and thus do not show an effect on the level of market orientation.

Moreover, the investigated concepts are influenced by different factors which makes the determination of a relationship difficult. In the case of this study, companies of different sizes, industries, and strategies were interviewed. Due to the contrasting characteristics of the organizations, comparisons are difficult to draw and justify. The comparison of segmentation variables and level of market orientation requires the exclusion of influencing factors. This can be achieved by interviewing companies which have similar sizes, strategies and industries. Similarly, the questionnaire on the level of market orientation consists of items, such as customer information, competition, technology and regulation, which can be influenced by the companies' size, industry and strategy as well.

Lastly, the segmentation variables and their influence is still a lack in theory. To be able to compare the different segmentation variables, a benchmark is needed.

Concluding, the data collection for segmentation variables as well as the level of market orientation have several influencing factors which have to be considered in advance to make valid comparisons. By sampling companies with similar characteristics, the differences between segmentation variables and the level of market orientation might be more visible and meaningful.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This limited study of five qualitative interviews supports the idea that companies using multiple variables and multiple dimensions for market segmentation, have also a higher market orientation.

Obviously a larger sample size would be needed to ensure statistical relevance. Larger sample sizes would also allow for comparative analysis between different customer groups.

Overall, although all interviewed companies are segmenting their markets and realize its importance for their business, they have a very hands-on and ad hoc approach. Mostly, there is no clearly defined and documented segmentation process. This is true for

new customer segmentation as well as for existing preferred customers. There is potential to a more effective and efficient process by implementing a more structured approach. Customer segmentation should be a defined part of an overall marketing strategy, which is formulated and communicated through-out the organization. This marketing strategy should also link the customer segmentation results with targeted marketing activities.

The study shows that using multiple variables in multiple dimensions has a positive effect on market orientation. So companies should take this layered and balanced approach of gathering macro, micro and social data. The individual variables and the importance of the different dimensions may differ based on the diversity of the business. Transactional companies, which have many customers, should especially include transactional micro data. Companies, whose business is strongly relationship based, should focus on detailed social information about the customer.

While the interviewed companies have a good focus on the social dimension (average 3.2 variables), the number of micro variables (average 1.4 variables) is remarkably low. There seems to be a clear potential to add more micro data for the customer segmentation approach.

Concluding, companies are recommended to segment their market with several different variables from different dimensions. The segmentation does not only help to allocate resources more effectively, but it also can indirectly increase the level of market orientation. To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the segmentation, companies need to align the business model and the company's specifics with the segmentation variables.

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## 8. APPENDIX

### 8.1 Interview Questions

#### Segmentation questions

1. Is your company serving multiple markets? And why?
2. Does your company use a method and criteria to segment a market? Why, why not?
3. What are the most important criteria
4. Which combination of variables/criteria do you use to group different customers into segments?
5. Are you using a prescribed model for market segmentation?
6. If yes, which model are you using?
7. What is your starting point for segmentation? (i.e. Customer size, geographical area)
8. How often does your company engage in market segmentation? (Ranging between occasionally or discontinues) and why?

#### Preferred customer questions

9. Do you have a classification system for customers? Why?
10. Is the classification system of customers different for segments? And why? Why not?
11. Do you assign different status types to customers? (e.g. preferred customer, top-customer, growth-customer, standard-customer, less interesting customer)
12. Which status types do you assign? And why?
13. How does a customer's reputation/status affect your behavior/offer towards him?

### 8.2 Questionnaire Items

#### Market orientation questions by Jaworksi & Kohli

1. In this business unit, we meet with customers at least once a year to find out what products or services they will need in the future.
2. Individuals from our manufacturing department interact directly with customers to learn how to serve them better.
3. In this business unit, we do a lot of in-house market research.
4. We are slow to detect changes in our customers' product preferences.
5. We poll end users at least once a year to assess the quality of our products and services.
6. We often talk with or survey those who can influence our end users' purchases (e.g., retailers, distributors).
7. We collect industry information through informal means (e.g., lunch with industry friends, talks with trade partners).
8. In our business unit, intelligence on our competitors is generated independently by several departments.
9. We are slow to detect fundamental shifts in our industry (e.g., competition, technology, regulation).
10. We periodically review the likely effect of changes in our business environment (e.g., regulation) on customers.
11. A lot of informal "hall talk" in this business unit concerns our competitors' tactics or strategies.
12. We have interdepartmental meetings at least once a quarter to discuss market trends and developments.
13. Marketing personnel in our business unit spend time discussing customers' future needs with other functional departments.
14. Our business unit periodically circulates documents (e.g., reports, newsletters) that provide information on our customers.
15. When something important happens to a major customer or market, the whole business unit knows about it in a short period.
16. Data on customer satisfaction are disseminated at all levels in this business unit on a regular basis.
17. There is minimal communication between marketing and manufacturing departments concerning market developments.
18. When one department finds out something important about competitors, it is slow to alert other departments.
19. It takes us forever to decide how to respond to our competitors' price changes.
20. Principles of market segmentation drive new product development efforts in this business unit.
21. For one reason or another we tend to ignore changes in our customers' product or service needs.
22. We periodically review our product development efforts to ensure that they are in line with what customers want.
23. Our business plans are driven more by technological advances than by market research.
24. Several departments get together periodically to plan a response to changes taking place in our business environment.
25. The product lines we sell depend more on internal politics than real market needs.
26. If a major competitor were to launch an intensive campaign targeted at our customers, we would implement a response immediately.

27. The activities of the different departments in this business unit are well coordinated.
28. Customer complaints fall on deaf ears in this business unit.
29. Even if we came up with a great marketing plan, we probably would not be able to implement it in a timely fashion.
30. We are quick to respond to significant changes in our competitors' pricing structures.
31. When we find out that customers are unhappy with the quality of our service, we take corrective action immediately.
32. When we find that customers would like us to modify a product or service, the departments involved make concerted efforts to do so.

## 8.3 Interview Transcripts

### Interview mit Company A

#### Segmentierung:

**Frage:** Fokussiert Ihre Firma mehrere Industrien?

**Antwort:** Nein das machen wir nicht. Wir unterscheiden nur zwischen Retailer und Händler.

**Frage:** Benutzt Ihre Firma eine Methode oder/und Kriterien zur Segmentierung von einem Markt (Neukunden)?

**Antwort:** Die erste Segmentierung ist immer größer. Du kannst auf 100 Firmen losgehen, aber wenn die alle nur eine Million Umsatz haben und du hast 70% gewonnen, dann bringt dir das auch nicht viel, weil der Anteil den du gewinnen kannst sind vielleicht 3% an deren Umsatzvolumen. Wenn du aber auf die 10 oder 20 Großen gehst, dann ist dein Hebel einfacher höher. Das heißt wichtig ist einerseits die Größe, also Umsatz. Das andere ist der Fit der wichtig ist. Welche sind die Kunden die zu einem passen?

Man braucht eine klare Kundenfokussierung. Wenn du da nicht direkt an den Kunden gehst, sondern an einen Retailer, da muss ich sicher sein, dass der Retailer die meisten Kunden Deckung hat. Wenn ich zu einem in Karstadt gehen würde, würeds nicht so passen wie wenn ich zu einem Manufactum gehen würde. Aber die zwei Sachen Größe und Cultural Fit sind die wichtigsten. An den Umsatzzahlen kann man ja abschätzen welche Kunden wie groß sind. Und dann eben durch den Auftritt und wenn man zum Retailer hinget und anschaut kann man sagen: passt das vom Cultural Fit, ja/nein?. Zuerst die Research und dann der wirkliche Besuch.

**Frage:** Dann würden Sie auch sagen, dass das die wichtigsten Kriterien sind?

**Antwort:** Ja, genau.

**Frage:** Dann könnten wir diese Frage ja überspringen, oder fallen Ihnen noch wichtige Kriterien ein die man benutzen könnte?

**Antwort:** Also klar, Größe und Geographie. Geographie benutzen wir für Exklusivitäten. Oder für Bereiche wo wir sagen "ok da ist ein Retailer der ist in Korea und Japan gut, und der hat in beiden einen guten Footprint und ist in beiden unter den top vier", dann machts mehr Sinn so einen anzugehen, weil wir haben keinen in Japan und keinen in Korea.

**Frage:** Welche Kombination von Variablen/ Kriterien werden benutzt um verschiedene Kunden zu gruppieren?

**Antwort:** Ähnlich wie oben. Also du musst natürlich auf den Profit schauen. Sagen wir mal mein Zielkunde ist Macy's in der USA und den will ich haben, dann muss man mit reinnehmen, dass es

Macy's ziemlich schlecht geht.

Und selbst wenn Macy's dich will, vielleicht haben sie irgendwelche unvorteilhaften Zahlungskonditionen was dann ein Risiko für dich ist.

Und neben Größe ist halt auch Stabilität ein wichtiges Thema.

Man darf nie vergessen, dass Kunden aufbauen kostet Geld, man muss investieren. Es muss, wenn du die Kundenbeziehung aufbaust, etwas langfristiges ergeben sonst rechnet sich das nicht.

**Frage:** Habt ihr ein vorgeschriebenes Modell?

**Antwort:** Nein.

In gewisser Weise, sollte jede Firma auch etwas opportunistisch sein.

**Frage:** Was wäre der erste Anhaltspunkt?

**Antwort:** Wie

ich oben schon gesagt habe, Größe und Geographie eigentlich.

**Frage:** Wie

oft segmentiert Ihre Firma den Markt? Warum?

**Antwort:** Idealerweise gibt es, in den meisten Industrien, jährliche Studien. Dann würde ich Segmentierung jährlich machen. Du hast auch oft Bonivereinigungen, die auf jährlichen Zahlen beruhen. Jährlich halte ich für eine gute Sache. Und halt opportunistisch.

#### Bevorzugung:

**Frage:** Haben Sie ein Klassifizierungssystem für Bestandskunden? Warum?

**Antwort:** Auf einer Seite der Umsatz aber auch Umsatzwachstum. Und dann gibt es immer Dinge die du in deiner Planung abschätzen musst. Profitabilität finde ich immer schwierig, weil du meistens in der Verrechnung feststellen wirst, dass oft Kosten nicht richtig zugeordnet werden. Meistens haben wir dann das verrechnen von Materialien was gut funktioniert. Alles andere läuft meistens quer. Im Produktionsbereich wird oft gestempelt, da musst du aber auch ganz vorsichtig sein; Es gibt ganz viele Firmen die dann irgendwelche Arbeitspläne machen und "Soll=Ist" zurück stempeln. Der Arbeitsvorbereiter schreibt 10 Minuten für einen Arbeitsgang der eine Stunde braucht, sie melden Soll=Ist zurück und du hast keinerlei Abgleich. Und dann sieht dein Crossprofit auf einmal gut aus und du wunderst dich warum das eigentlich nicht funktioniert. Aber was du meistens hast ist die Verrechnung von dem Material. Idealerweise haben wir dann noch eine Sichtweise, eine Prognose wie sich der Kunde entwickeln wird.

**Frage:** Wie würden Sie denn das Potential von einem Kunden messen?

**Antwort:** Ja dafür muss

man dann den Kunden kennen.

Es ist das wichtigste die Kunden zu kennen. Wenn du viel über Airbus weisst, dann weisst du wann habe ich eine Ratenerhöhung und wann wird die Ratene

rhörung kostenmäßig erfasst.  
Und wenn du weißt, dass es in  
dem Jahr kommt, dann kannst wiederum einschätze  
n wann du wie viel zu tun hast.

## Interview mit Company B

Segmentierung:

**Frage:** Fokussiert ihr Firma mehrere Industrien und warum?

**Antwort:** Ja, wir segmentieren die Industrien und zwar nach Branchen. Beispiel wäre die Baubranche und dann segmentiert man weiter in Hochbau, Stahlbau und so weiter. Also segmentieren wir nochmal in Subsegmente. Das heisst, von dem Innenausbau geht es weiter in den Trockenbau.

**Frage:** Benutzt ihr Firma eine Methode oder Kriterien zur Segmentierung von Neukunden?

**Antwort:** Die Kriterien sind generell abhängig von den Branchen. Es gibt einen sogenannten NOGA-Code, das ist Branchen Codierung, und dann wird anhand diesem NOGA-Code segmentiert. Also ich bin mir nicht sicher, aber der Code ist national und überregional verwendbar. Man bekommt durch Marketing Instituten entsprechende Kundenmaterial. Möchte man z.B. Kunden akquirieren, kann man sagen: gib mir alle Kunden mit der Größe 100 (Mitarbeiter).

**Frage:** Gibt es mehr Kriterien die wichtig sind für die Segmentierung von Neukunden?

**Antwort:** Es ist wichtig in welchem Geschäft man tätig ist. Ist man in einem Geschäft tätig wo man sehr viele Kunden hat oder nicht. Bei den Großunternehmen ist es so, dass du natürlich nicht nur so eine Liste als Grundlage dient. Viele haben dann wahrscheinlich auch schon eigene Informationen.

**Frage:** Welche Kombination von Variablen wird benutzt um verschiedene Kunden zu gruppieren?

**Antwort:** Wir haben einen Gesamtmarkt den wir bearbeiten möchten und auf diesen Markt geht man auf eine geographische Segmentierung hin. Wenn der Umsatz steigt, geht man nach Branchen segmentieren. Aber wir gucken auch eher auf die Größe des Kunden. Man muss auch entscheiden, zielt unser Produkt auf große Kunden oder eher kleinere? Das hat teilweise auch mit der eigenen Macht und Reputation zu tun, weil man als Kleinunternehmen hat man gar kein Zugang zu Großunternehmen.

**Frage:** Und bei der Segmentierung, haben Sie ein spezielles Modell?

**Antwort:** Also es gibt da nicht irgendwo so ein spezielles Modell wie man zu segmentieren hat, sondern normalerweise wird eine Segmentierung auf einer Strategie aufgebaut. Wenn du sagst du möchtest wachsen, machst du eine Marktanalyse und gehst dann die verschiedenen Branchen Potenziale analysieren. Da wo man die meisten Übereinstimmungen hat, geht man auch die Randgruppen analysieren. Aber dies ist mit der Strategie eines Unternehmens zusammengepackt.

**Frage:** Und dann benutzt man auch für verschiedene Industrien verschiedene Strategien?

**Antwort:** Ja also die analytische Arbeit ist für Alle mehr oder weniger gleich. Aber die dann anzuwenden, die Strategie, kann natürlich komplett unterschiedlich sein.

**Frage:** Gibt es ein Kriterium was sie als erstes benutzen?

**Antwort:** Es wäre so wie ich es eben erwähnt habe, Geographie, die einzelnen Branchen, Größe des Kunden. Aber wichtig ist auch das Potenzial. Wir machen dann immer Potenzialmodelle, bei jedem Kunden z.B. Anzahl der Mitarbeiter multipliziert mit Faktor X und umso höher das Potenzial, umso eher gehen wir ihn dann besuchen.

**Frage:** Und wie würden Sie sagen, durch was kann man das Potenzial einschätzen?

**Antwort:** Das ist auch wieder von Branche zu Branche unterschiedlich. Z.B. bei den Firmen die mit Handwerkern arbeiten da macht man sehr oft mit Anzahl der Mitarbeiter. Ich war aber auch schon in Branchen wie dem Gesundheitswesen, da hat man die Anzahl der Patientenzimmer genommen. Oder bei Hotels nimmt man die Anzahl der Gästezimmer. Man muss pro Branche eine Kennzahl definieren die man relativ einfach in Erfahrung bringen kann, die dann multipliziert mit einem Faktor zu einem realistischen Potenzial kommen kann. Es ist nicht immer dasselbe, aber die Anzahl der Mitarbeiter ist nicht schlecht. Wenn man mit Gemeinden oder Kantonen nimmt man auch die Einwohnerzahl. Wenn ich das Investitionspotenzial von Baden-Baden vergleichen möchte mit München, dann nehme ich z.B. der Einwohnerzahl multipliziert mit Faktor X. Diese Modelle, die diesen Faktor ergeben, muss ich durch tiefgründige Analyse um vier bis fünf Beispielkunden durchführen. Da könnte ich alleine eine Stunde darüber sprechen.

**Frage:** Wie oft segmentieren Sie den Markt?

**Antwort:** Die Segmentierung würde ich als einen evolutionären Prozess beschreiben, das heisst wenn ich wachse komme ich an eine Grenze wo dann ein Markt von einem Mitarbeiter oder einer Abteilung nicht mehr ausreichend bearbeitet werden kann. Dann muss ich entweder mehr Mitarbeiter einstellen, aber wenn dann auch noch die Produktkomplexität zu nimmt, dann ist der Zeitpunkt erreicht wo ich anfangen zu segmentieren. Das ist verbunden mit dem Wachstum, das Wachstum gibt das Tempo der Segmentierung vor und dann natürlich auch neue Produkte: Wenn ich in einem Produktfeld arbeite wo jeder das Knowhow hat und ich dann ein neues Produkt einführe, dass in die selbe Branche reingeht, aber ein höheres Knowhow braucht, dann muss ich vielleicht ein Subsegment rauslösen oder Mitarbeiter speziell ausbilden, damit sie dieses Produkt üben



erhaupt verkaufen können.  
Die Segmentierung ist nichts statisches, die man alle fünf Jahre macht, sondern ist ein kontinuierlicher Prozess der mit der Strategie, den Produkten und der jährlichen Strategie abgestimmt werden muss. Das wichtigste ist die Strategie, sie gibt die Richtung vor und der Erfolg das Tempo.

Bevorzugte Kunden:

**Frage:** Haben Sie ein Klassifizierungssystem für Bestandskunden?

**Antwort:** Wir gruppieren unsere Bestandskunden in 3 Typen, der Top-Kunde, der aktive Kunde und der passive Kunde. Der Top-Kunde ist uns sehr loyal, er bekommt auch viel Aufmerksamkeit. Der aktive Kunde kauft öfters mal was, der passive Kunde ist eher durch Zufall unser Kunde.

**Frage:** Unterscheidet sich das System zwischen verschiedenen Industrien?

**Antwort:** Es würde möglich sein, aber nein das tut es nicht.

**Frage:** Welche Statusgruppen benutzen sie und warum?

**Antwort:** Die drei Statusgruppen benutzen wir, da man einen guten Überblick bekommt.

**Frage:** Inwiefern beeinflusst der Status des Kunden das entgegengebrachte Verhalten?

**Antwort:** Wie gesagt, unser Top-Kunde bekommt viel mehr Aufmerksamkeit. Er bekommt Einladungen von uns, er kann seine Wünsche äußern welche dann beachtet werden und er bekommt ein besseres Angebot. Ich denke das es im b2b-Markt normal ist, dass Top-Kunden einen Produktrabatt bekommen. Zudem benutzen wir andere Kanäle um die Kunden zu erreichen, passive Kunden vielleicht durch Emails. Bei aktiven Kunden wird es direkter, z.B. durch Telefonate. Top-Kunden werden auch direkt angesprochen, öfters durch Besuche und intensiven Gesprächen.

## Interview mit Company C

### Segmentierung

**Frage:** Fokussiert ihre Firma mehrere Industrien, und warum?

**Antwort:** Wir fokussieren primär auf drei Plattformen, wir haben architect and designers und das ist generell weltweit.

Dann haben wir Spezifizierungen wenn man Projekte angeht, man kann z.B um an ein Projekt dranzukommen, versuchst du die Spezifizierung deiner Produkte über architect and

designers zu bekommen, weil die sind ja sehr früh in einem Projekt drin. Du

hast mehrere übergeordnete Channels wonach du läufst. Du hast ein Retail, und

der geht eigentlich weltweit, das ist das erste wonach wir gehen. Und

die Kriterien da, fangen an mit: welche anderen Brands haben die eigentlich im Haus?

Weil wir im Premium-

Hochsegment sind, können wir nicht dänische Bettelager angehen. Nichts gegen die, das sind super Firmen, aber da finden wir nicht unsere Kunden. Und schon da fängst du

an mit der Segmentierung.

Was haben die insgesamt für Brands, was für ein Auftreten haben die und so weiter.

Und Segmentierung zwei ist, wie ist das Commitment zu uns?

Das ganze geht darum: glaubst du an die Sache? Wenn wir das Gefühl haben, dass er einfach alle Brands collected

um einfach alles anbieten zu können, dann ist er mit uns sehr falsch am Platz.

Da haben wir weltweit, vielleicht nur ein paar Ausnahmen, weil es da kein Anderen gibt;

das können Städte sein wie Hong Kong, Singapur oder auch Australien usw.,

die sind sehr fokussiert auf wenig Händler die dann aber viel haben. Also zurück zum Commitment, das ist etwas was

ich, meine Leute, mein Verkaufsteam, das testen wir immer.

Da benutzen wir immer sehr viel Zeit, wir sind nicht unterwegs um einen Kunden zu finden, sondern einen Partner. Dann ist plötzlich Preis sekundär.

Ich diskutiere mit meinen Kunden Preis prinzipiell nicht, nicht weil ich nicht will, aber weil wir da

gar keinen Fokus mehr drauf haben. Für uns ist Partnerschaft, Commitment, Vertrauen,

das wir unsere Ware sehr ordentlich machen, unsere Lieferfähigkeit,

und dann wird es plötzlich nicht egal, aber sekundär mit dem Preis.

Das ist eigentlich die Segmentierung.

**Frage:** Und wenn du auf der Partnersuche bist, was wäre das erste Kriterium um zu segmentieren?

**Antwort:** Das erste was ich mache ist, ich gehe ins Internet auf deren Website und schaue mir an was für Brands die haben. Das schöne ist, die Möbelbranche ist weltweit eigentlich eine sehr kleine Branche. Ich hab beim Briefing

von meinem Salesteam auch gesagt, guckt nach bei anderen Firmen an, da wo wir uns auch sehen.

Wen haben die da? Dann gehst du diese Kunden an. Und dann kommst du mit Commitment. Heutzutage, bei uns, hat es sehr viel mit Personality zu tun. Ich achte sehr drauf, wenn ich Leute einstelle, dass die ein ordentliches Auftreten haben. Also das generelle Auftreten.

**Frage:** Würden Sie sagen, dass es noch andere wichtige Kriterien gibt, außer Personality und Image?

**Antwort:** Zahlen z.B. interessieren mich nicht. Die kommen erst im dritten Schritt.

Was hilft es mir wenn ich sage der muss 100.000 verkaufen? Der Kunde muss reinkommen. Wenn alles andere stimmt, kommen die Zahlen auch.

**Frage:** Das heisst für die Segmentierung, wird es weniger anhand eines Modells gemacht?

**Antwort:** Ja.

**Frage:** Wie oft segmentiert ihre Firma den Markt nach Neukunden?

**Antwort:** Das machen wir laufend.

Unser Markt ist sehr klein, man kennt sich. Da wo der Markt sehr sehr groß ist, wie bei architect and design, der wird laufend durchgescannt. Da werden Aktivitäten und Einladungen gemacht um an die ranzukommen.

### Bevorzugte Kunden

**Frage:** Haben Sie ein Klassifizierungssystem für Bestandskunden?

**Antwort:** Sind wir wieder bei der Ausgangsposition: Commitment. Ein committeder Kunde

hat nicht immer mit Zahlen zu tun. Nimm die Stadt Freiburg, da hast du einen committeden Partner.

Der entschließt sich dafür eine Ausstellung mit uns zu machen. Der ist committed aber verkauft nichts.

Es hängt auch viel von der Produktentwicklung ab, du musst das richtige Produkt haben. Wir klassifizieren unsere Kunden eigentlich nach: wie viel, wie kompetent er ist und was er von uns weiterverkauft.

Bei architect and design, bekommen bevorzugte Kunden sehr oft

Emails, Besuche, wir sind ständig in Kontakt. Wir haben Kunden die einfach wirklich wichtig für uns sind, aber das wissen die auch. Und

der wird dementsprechend behandelt.

**Frage:** Und unterscheidet ihr die Klassifizierungssysteme zwischen den verschiedenen Industrien?

**Antwort:** Nein, das machen wir nicht.

**Frage:** Zu den Top-Kunden, bekommen die irgendwelche Vorteile die anderen vorenthalten sind?

**Antwort:** Ja und nein. Wir haben eine Einkaufspreisliste, und der ist gleich für alle.

Und dann haben wir eine empfohlene Verkaufspreisliste, aber das dürfen wir nicht direkt beeinflussen.

Das zweite, kommt wieder auf das Commitment an. Wenn jemand sagt,

ich möchte nur aus dem Katalog kaufen, dann beko

mmt er den normalen Einkaufspreis. Wenn aber Ware auf den Boden stellt, dann bekommt er einen extra Bonus. Dann bekommen die Schulungen, und so weiter.

Und wenn die sich dann schulen lassen und bestimmte Umsätze erreichen, bekommen die auch einen Vorteil im Einkaufspreis.

**Frage:** Und zu den verschiedenen Bestandskunden, die werden nicht in verschiedene Gruppen geordnet?

Antwort: Also wir haben verschiedene Kunden, manche sind im Atelier, manche sind im Retail oder Distributor usw.. Außer dem muss

ich auch wissen, woher ich diesen Kontakt habe. Habe ich ihn auf einer Messe getroffen?

Oder durch einen Freund getroffen?

Das ist immer wichtig die Herkunft zu wissen und was er macht, weil dann kannst du auch gezielte Kampagnen oder Newsletter schicken. Deswegen benutzen wir das sehr viel Zeit und Geld.

## Interview mit Company D

Segmentierung:

**Frage:** Wer sind ihre Kunden?

**Antwort:** Die direkten Kunden sind die großen Endkunden, also ganz klassisch in der Automobilindustrie, ist es der Mercedes, BMW, Fiat usw.

Und im Bereich der Konsumergoods sind wir natürlich auch bei Nestlé drin.

**Frage:** Das heisst ihre Arbeit ist sehr Branchenübergreifend?

**Antwort:** Ja genau, es gibt natürlich Fokusbranchen, aber vom Potenzial her, können wir Branchenübergreifend rangehen.

**Frage:** Und gibt es bestimmte Kriterien mit denen Sie Neukunden ausfindig machen?

**Antwort:** Bestimmte Kriterien an sich nicht, wir sind immer sehr Potenzial fokussiert. Man muss sagen, dass die Branche in den letzten Jahren einen unglaublichen Boost bekommen hat, dass eigentlich wir nur reagieren. Dies ist eigentlich schlecht, weil ich möchte mich proaktiv ausrichten und eben die Kunden bearbeiten, die für uns interessanter sind und von den Konditionen spaß machen.

Was nicht spaß macht, sind die Mobilisten, die dir sämtlichen Verträge aufdrücken, aber dort spielt halt die Musik, denn dort hast du auch große Aufträge. Dann musst du dich aber immer mit Lieferzeiten und Strafen auseinandersetzen.

**Frage:** Sie hatten eben das Potenzial erwähnt, wie berechnen Sie dieses?

**Antwort:** Wir machen da eine Kundenbefragung vor Ort.

Das heisst es ist unsere Kunst beim Kunden mit den richtigen Fragen die Potenziale abzufragen.

**Frage:** Dadurch, dass Sie keine Kriterien zur Segmentierung benutzen, nehme ich an Sie haben keine feste Kombination von Variablen die angewendet wird?

**Antwort:** Ne, wir gucken auch nicht auf Revenue. Wenn die Firma "ABC" ein Kunde von mir ist, und die einen Revenue von 3 Milliarden machen, dann heisst es nicht automatisch, dass ich dort mein Potenzial sehe. Ich mache nämlich fahrerlose Transportsysteme. Das heisst ich muss direkt beim Kunden Fragen, wie viele Transportsysteme er überhaupt benutzt, damit ich da eine Ahnung hab wie viel Potenzial für mich wirklich vorherrscht. Das heisst man muss erstmal die Industrie segmentieren, die für einen Potenzial besitzt.

**Frage:** Wie oft segmentieren Sie?

**Antwort:** In dieser Firma segmentieren wir eigentlich gar nicht mehr, also es wurde einmal was segmentiert. Dadurch, dass man nur reagiert, hat man kaum mehr Zeit dafür. Das heisst es ist jetzt meine Aufgabe eine Mittelfristplanung einzuführen. Diese beinhaltet, das

man dann einmal im Jahr die Marktsegmentierung auffrischt.

Bevorzugten Kunden:

**Frage:** Haben Sie ein Klassifizierungssystem, bzw. Klassifizieren Sie ihre Kunden?

**Antwort:** Ja und nein, wir klassifizieren nach Umsatz mit dem Kunden, nach Bestellhäufigkeit und nach Projektlaufzeit, das ist für uns wichtig. Umso länger so ein Projekt geht umso besser, denn heutzutage werden die Maschinen eher geleased als gekauft. Das heisst dadurch haben wir ein sehr kontinuierliches Einkommen und keine ganz hohen Peaks mit folgender Leerlaufzeit.

**Frage:** Benennen Sie Kundensegmente?

**Antwort:** Nein, aber das ist meine Aufgabe. Ich möchte eine Quadranten-Matrix einführen, bei der ich wenigstens die Kunden in A, B, C und D segmentiere. Dabei zählt der Marktanteil beim Kunden und das dann auf der anderen Achse mit Potenzial des Kunden.

**Frage:** Haben Sie denn bevorzugte Kunden?

**Antwort:** Sagen wir es mal so, für mich zählt der Kunde mit dem höchsten Potenzial.

Es kann sein, dass ich einen Kunde hab mit dem mache ich den höchsten Umsatz, aber vielleicht bin ich auch mit dem schon am Ende. Also ich bevorzuge Kunden die nicht so eine große Durchdringung haben, aber noch ein ordentliches Potenzial.

**Frage:** Die Kunden mit dem hohen Potenzial, bekommen die ein bestimmtes Verhalten entgegengebracht?

**Antwort:** Ja da haben wir eine "Attackieren-Strategie".

Dort wird dann die Penetrationsstrategie durchgezogen. Ich muss dann halt schauen, dass ich dort die höchste Kompetenz und Drehzahl quasi da habe. Sie bekommen dementsprechend auch mehr Aufmerksamkeit von uns.

## Interview mit Company E

Segmentierung:

**Frage:** Wer sind ihre Kunden?

**Antwort:** Das sind kleine oder mittelgroße internationale pharmazeutische Unternehmen, für die wir Entwicklungsdienstleistung machen.

Also wir entwickeln Produkte.

Aber wir stellen auch Maschinen her für die Pharma Industrie. Aber auch Food/Feed/Chemicals. Das heisst wir haben unterschiedliche B2B Märkte.

Aber

ich weiss mehr über den Markt des Entwicklungsdienstleister und werde aus der Perspektive antworten.

**Frage:** Wie viele Kunden haben Sie?

**Antwort:** Mehrere hundert bis tausend Kunden.

**Frage:** Geht es nur um den Verkauf von Produkten oder wird auch eine Beziehung aufgebaut?

**Antwort:** Ne, es ist schon eine Kollaboration.

**Frage:** Und gibt es ein bestimmtes Vorgehen wenn man nach Kunden segmentiert, haben Sie bestimmte Kriterien die Sie benutzen?

**Antwort:** Ich gehe dann dahin und gucke mir die Entwicklungs Cluster europaweit an. Segmentiere mir dann da raus, welche Startups oder neue Firmen in unser Lösungsspektrum reinpassen.

Also die Großkunden schauen wir uns auch an, aber die müssen wir nicht segmentieren, weil wir mit den meisten schon Business führen. Da muss ich halt noch gucken, gibt es irgendwelche Merch and Acquisitions und stimmt noch die Kontaktschiene. Aber für uns sind die Großkunden die Basis.

**Frage:** Und wenn ihr nach Startups segmentiert, nach welchen Kriterien geht ihr dann?

**Antwort:** Das erste Segmentierungsfeld wäre, können wir eine Lösung anbieten. Die Finanzierung der Startups ist dann im zweiten Teil, z.B. der Revenue. Bei uns ist mehr im Vordergrund, können wir dem potenziellen Kunden einen Added Value generieren.

**Frage:** Und bei Großkunden, welche Kriterien sind dort relevant?

**Antwort:** Wir gehen über sämtliche geographische Grenzen hinaus, also ist das nicht so wichtig für uns. Aber

die Chancen das wir einen Kunden kriegen in Indien ist sehr reduziert, weil es ein Billiglohnland ist, und die sind auch nicht bereit zu bezahlen. Aber

ich kann gleichzeitig Kunden haben in Korea, es ist auch ein Billiglohnland, aber die haben eine andere Einstellung.

Das heisst ich habe prinzipiell keine geographische Limitierung, sondern eine Limitierung was sind die Leute in der Nische bereit auch auf den Tisch zu legen.

**Frage:** Und wie würde die Segmentierung in einer Reihenfolge aussehen?

**Antwort:** Wie eben, bei welchen Kunden können wir Value adden, welche passen in unser Preissegment rein. Dann noch Geographie, je näher desto besser. Hat

die Firma Potenzial um überhaupt so ein Outsourcing-Projekt finanziell zu stemmen.

**Frage:** Und wie oft segmentiert ihr den Markt?

**Antwort:** Laufend. Es ist nicht so das wir Strategiesitzungen einmal im Jahr haben, wo wollen wir hin? Sondern passiert laufend, auch durch Neuigkeiten von Marktverschiebungen.

Es ist eher entwicklungs getrieben. Ich bin der Meinung, wir müssen uns der Marktsituation anpassen.

Das geht zum Teil schneller, oder langsamer.

Bestandskunden:

**Frage:** Haben Sie ein Klassifizierungssystem für Bestandskunden?

**Antwort:** Ja. Also typisch ABC-Modell. Prinzipiell, wir haben Großkunden bei uns, die eine gewisse Umsatzschwelle erreichen und das die als Großkunden klassifiziert werden, aber nicht als preferred Customer.

Bei uns werden Kleinkunden genauso bedient. Wir haben Umsatzanalysen, und dann werden die benannt, aber wir haben dann keine spezifischen Aktionen die wir für die machen. Es kann natürlich sein, wenn es irgendwo eng wird, dann ja, aber grundsätzlich wird jeder Kunde so ähnlich behandelt wie es geht. Aber

du weisst ja wie es im täglichen Leben so ist, wenn ein Produktionsloch gibt, dann ist eher ein preferred Customer der vorgeschoben wird. Aber ist jetzt nicht so, dass wir irgendwelche Events für die machen. Bei uns ist es so, dass ein Startup in kürzester Zeit ein Keyaccount werden und umkehrt. Es kann sein, dass die ganz kleinen, auf dem Papier

die größten Projekte fahren. Deswegen versuchen wir jeden ähnlich oder gleich zu bedienen.

Und beim Beitrag wirds dann interessant.

Ich kann ja einen Kunden haben der macht 100 Millionen Umsatz, aber der drückt mich so stark im Preis, dass ich nur noch eine Marge habe von 2% hab. Dann mach ich noch 2 Millionen mit ihm. Oder

ich kann einen Kunden haben mit dem mache ich 50 Millionen, und habe eine Beitragsmarge von 10%, und dann muss

man sich überlegen welcher interessanter ist für uns. Aber dann gibt es noch sowas wie potenzielle Projekte was wichtig sein kann. Kann ich den Kunden weiter ausbauen?

Das sind alles Faktoren die ich bei einem preferred Customer anschau.