

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MARKETING AND BRAND
ORIENTATION FOR
MICROBREWERIES IN THE
NETHERLANDS

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**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARKETING AND
BRAND ORIENTATION FOR MICROBREWERIES
IN THE NETHERLANDS**

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to identify the current level of marketing and branding activities of microbreweries in the Netherlands through the concepts of Marketing stages and Brand Orientation Archetypes. The relationship between the marketing stages and brand orientation was also identified through this research. Along with this, this study also aimed to understand the area of interest of marketing research of these microbreweries. A five-item scale was developed to measure the marketing stages, and a three-construct scale (Brand Importance, Brand Differentiation and Brand Intelligence) was used to measure the level of Brand Orientation. The study revealed that none of the microbreweries that took part in the study was in the highest marketing stage or brand orientation archetype. Further, the study identified that the concepts of marketing stages and brand orientation have a positive relationship, but these concepts can be further divided into different constructs. Further research is required to understand the relationship between these concepts to get a magnified view of the intricate nature of the relationship between marketing and brand orientation. Microbreweries in this study did not show a specific area of interest for marketing research but it was identified that the firms at Stage 3 of marketing and Embryonic Brand Orientation archetype were more interested in marketing research than the other two groups of microbreweries.

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1. Introduction

Small-Medium sized enterprises or SMEs are identified as key drivers of any economy (Abimbola, 2001; Odoom et al., 2017). Literature shows that marketing and branding practices are highly relevant and important for SMEs, but the conventional theories are rigid and are challenging to execute in an SME environment (Abimbola, 2001). Studies suggest a difference between the brand management practices of SMEs (small-medium-sized enterprises) and large organisations (Berthon et al., 2008).

It is suggested that literature on SME marketing and brand management is rooted in marketing concepts in general (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). This fact can be used to assume that the challenges SMEs face in implementing marketing are also transferable to brand management. Some challenges mentioned in the literature are lack of resources, expertise, and limited impact in the marketplace (Carson, 1985). It was also noted that smaller firms tend to have a negative attitude towards marketing. The thought process is that marketing is a cost. There is also an inherent belief that every case or firm is particular and general rules cannot be applied. (Carson & Cromie, 1990).

The primary purpose of branding is to create a brand which can be differentiated from its competitors, and the targeted customer group can relate to it (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Brand focussed SMEs perform better in the market than their competitors (Berthon et al., 2008). However, at the same time, there are challenges to branding for SMEs because of a lower voice (lower impact) in the market and a lack of financial resources (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Hence, it becomes important to understand marketing and branding in the context of SMEs.

Literature suggests that a firm's marketing goes through different stages as it grows. According to Carson, there are four stages. The first stage is "initial marketing activity", where new firms enter the market; this is followed by "the reactive selling stage", in which the company's sales expand. The third stage is "the DIY marketing approach", where the owner/manager engages in marketing activity themselves, and the final stage of the marketing evolution is "integrated, proactive marketing", where a clear marketing framework is in place, which contributes toward clear objectives (Carson, 1985). Similar studies have tried to study the firm's marketing activities as it grows (Tyebjee et al., 1983; Lam & Harker, 2015). These studies are essential theories to this research and are described in the next section.

Brand orientation is an approach in which the organisation's processes revolve around creating, protecting, and developing brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers to achieve lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands (Urde, 1999). The latest work on brand orientation states that it is a strategic orientation in which companies seek to create value and increase their competitiveness by building brand equity (Huang & Tsai, 2020). Based on SMEs' brand orientation level, a model was developed where they were divided into three archetypes: minimalist, embryonic, and integrated brand orientation. Minimalist firms pursue low-key marketing with negligible branding. Embryonic firms have a more robust approach to marketing but very limited or no branding activity; any branding activity present is informal. Integrated firms are the ones that have strong marketing and branding activities in place (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). A recent study attempted to create a scale for measuring brand orientation using four dimensions. The dimensions mentioned were brand importance, consistency, differentiation, and intelligence (Piha et al., 2021). This will be discussed in depth in the next section.

The discussion so far can be used to assume that there is a direct relationship between the brand orientation archetypes (Wong & Merrilees, 2005) and the stage of marketing evolution in the business life cycle (Carson, 1985). The concepts of marketing evolution stages and brand orientation are used in this study to understand marketing and branding in the SME context. This research aims to find the empirical relationship between the marketing evolution stages and the brand orientation archetypes and will try to address if brand orientation is included at a particular stage of the marketing evolution or if it starts at the beginning with the first stage of marketing evolution.

Data will be collected from Dutch microbreweries. Research by USDA suggests that the number of craft breweries in the Netherlands increased from 200 in 2012 to 800 in 2020, with an average production of 2.4 billion litres per year. Only 15% of the beer consumed in the Netherlands is imported; the remaining proportion is brewed in the country itself (*Netherlands*, n.d.). Similar research was carried out to understand the brand management system of microbreweries in Italy, which focussed on mature industries. The study suggested that a future research direction can be to understand the brand management system of SMEs at different stages of the business life cycle (Cannatelli, 2017). Hence, the brewing industry in the Netherlands becomes a good data point for this research to understand the branding of microbreweries in the Netherlands. The study will also try to determine the type of marketing /branding questions these microbreweries want to address and if the microbreweries at the same stage have the same problems.

1.1. Central Research Question

“What is the relationship between brand orientation and the marketing evolution stages in microbreweries in the Netherlands?”.

1.2. Sub-Research Questions

Several sub-research questions will be answered to achieve this study’s objectives and get answers to the central research questions. This study will answer the following sub-research questions: “How to determine the marketing stage of the firm?”, “At what stage of the marketing evolution cycle do microbreweries include brand orientation?”, “What kind of relationship exists between the market evolution stages and the brand orientation of the firm?”, “What are the marketing questions of the firm?” and “What are the marketing questions of microbreweries at different marketing stages?”.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

This section discusses this study's relevant theories, which eventually provide a basis for developing a framework for the research.

2.1. Marketing Evolution and Business Growth

The literature describes the type of marketing activities or the extent to which marketing is pursued while a firm continues to grow. Studies have either been conducted to identify a firm's marketing approach at a particular stage of the business life cycle, or the inverse of this is pursued where the marketing stage of the company is determined by the type of marketing activities a firm seeks. This section will discuss the characteristics of such firms and the division of stages as mentioned in the literature. Similar approaches/ features will be grouped to form one stage for this study.

In the pre-start-up stage of a business, social relations run the industry by providing resources and market information (Lam & Harker, 2015). The owner/manager relies on his/her friends' and acquaintances' networks to generate sales. Products are highly customised to their needs and customers get undivided attention from top management (Tyebjee et al., 1983). Lam & Harker also discussed this as part of the "early start-up" stage in their article. Due to the small customer base, customer demands are given utmost priority in terms of price, quality and delivery, even if the product requirements or delivery date is unrealistic (Lam & Harker, 2015). Profitability is low due to an insufficient focus on sales and more focus on lower prices and customised production. Selling, marketing, and promotional activity are minimal (Carson, 1985). The only marketing element present at this stage is word-of-mouth promotion which is not controllable. So, there are haphazard and unconscious elements of marketing present, but they are not coordinated. This stage was identified as "Entrepreneurial marketing" (Tyebjee et al., 1983) or "initial marketing activity" (Carson, 1985). Although the literature suggests that the marketing at this stage is minimum, it can be argued that it is effective as the firm knows its target market and serves precisely the needs of this target market; hence, the need for promotion does not arise as such. Some elements of Carson's "reactive selling stage" can also be included in this stage. He stated that customer focus is the priority; companies do not look for new customers but focus on satisfying the demand of the customer base present. He noted that this stage is ideal for a small firm with sufficient demand and low competition, but problems arise once the demand stagnates (Carson, 1985). For this study, this stage will be identified as **stage 1**, where the firm focuses on social relations for business with a higher focus on production, less promotional/marketing activity as it is not required and is uncoordinated if it exists and satisfying customer demands as their fundamental goal.

Once a regular customer base is established, the firm tries to build new customer relationships, which is seen as the direction for future growth (Lam & Harker, 2015). As the company grows and the customer base increases, the customised product strategy changes to a more standardised production line, and the firm enters the opportunistic marketing stage (Tyebjee et al., 1983). The company is in the growth/ maturity phase of the business and is focused on increasing the product line or gaining new markets at this stage. To maintain economies of scale, many firms focus on production and sales-oriented strategies and on getting orders from existing/ new customers even at low-profit margins (Lam & Harker, 2015). It is at this stage that the "catch-22" situation also arises. It states that a firm needs a marketing specialist to increase its sales but also needs sales to have enough financial resources to hire a marketing

specialist (Carson, 1985). This leads to the “DIY marketing” approach, as stated by Carson. The managers/ owners of the firm engage in marketing activity, and the small firm's performance greatly depends on the owner/ manager's aptitude for marketing. More marketing/ promotional tools are included, such as an embryonic brochure, printed material to provide information and standard promotional letters (Carson, 1985). This stage will be identified as **stage 2** for this study, in which firms focus on finding new customers, standardising the production line, the firm includes more marketing elements and the owner/manager themselves practice marketing.

The growth of the firm in terms of sales might result in the managers/ owners delegating their day-to-day tasks, which unconsciously might result in the formation of a sophisticated marketing department identified as the “responsive marketing stage”. Firms have a better understanding of how to promote their products. The managers' efforts might result in a larger budget for promotion, customer service and market research. Customer requirements primarily drive marketing goals. Market saturation may result in slow growth or become economically infeasible due to competitive forces (Tyebjee et al., 1983). This can be identified as **stage 3** for this study, in which more marketing elements, such as promotion, customer service and market research, are included, and a sophisticated marketing department might be formed.

Carson states that the final stage of marketing evolution is integrated and proactive marketing, where each marketing activity supports another and eventually helps in achieving the short-term and long-term goals of the firm (Carson, 1985). As the business diversifies, the firm must reorganise, forming divisions to cope with increased complexity. So, marketing reorganisation occurs. At this stage, marketing emerges at the corporate level and the corporate-level marketing personnel act as in-house consultants for managers in smaller divisions. The function of marketing is to monitor the company's divisions and maintain a favourable image of the firm and its products with customers and the public. Marketing determines the company's strategic direction and new growth opportunities (Tyebjee et al., 1983). This can be identified as **stage 4** for this study, where a more proactive marketing approach is present, marketing activities are coordinated, and marketing determines strategies for the company's growth.

Table 1: Characteristics of different marketing evolution stages in summary.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Knowledge about customers	Customers well known	Want to identify new customers	Know a newly established target segment	The target segment is well known, and firms try to expand it or look for new possible target segments.
Who are the customers?	Social Relations	Social relations + new customers with similar requirements	Target Segment (A group of customers with similar needs and characteristics)	Target segment and new unknown customers
Promotional elements	Word of mouth	Brochure, Printed information, promotional letters and social media.	Branding strategies, social media and customer relationship building.	Tools from the first three stages, maintaining customer relationship
Coordination level of marketing activities	Uncoordinated and disjoint	Owner/ managers perform marketing and coordination depending on their marketing acumen.	Marketing is conducted by the marketing department, which functions independently from other departments.	High level of intra-functional coordination as the scope of operations increases and marketing activities are planned.
Core activities of the stage	Customisation to the customers' needs	Identifying the target segment	Building customer loyalty	Firm reorganisation and marketing planning

This section will help in getting an answer to sub-research question 1.

2.2. Brand Orientation and Brand orientation archetypes

The concept of brand orientation has evolved significantly since its inception in 1994 (Urde, 1994). Urde stated that brand orientation is an approach in which the organisation's processes revolve around creating, protecting, and developing brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers to achieve lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands (Urde, 1999). The latest work on brand orientation states that it is a strategic orientation in which companies seek to create value and increase their competitiveness by building brand equity (Huang & Tsai, 2020).

A recent study attempted to create a scale for measuring brand orientation using four dimensions. The dimensions mentioned were brand importance, differentiation, intelligence and consistency. Brand Importance is associated with a company's attitude towards using branding as an asset and having a positive attitude towards it. Brand differentiation relates to a company's ability to take decisions and actions, resulting in brands perceived as unique and distinct from their competitors. Brand intelligence is a tool which provides the firm with information about consumers' perception of its brands and competitive offerings. Brand consistency means standardising and preserving brand image and meanings associated with it over time and at a given place (Piha et al., 2021).

Wong and Merrilees identified three stages/archetypes of brand orientation for SMEs. The stages or archetypes of brand orientation were identified as minimalist, embryonic, and integrated. For this study, the characteristics of the three archetypes will be described in terms of the brand orientation measurement constructs (Piha et al., 2021) described earlier. Since this study will be cross-sectional, brand consistency cannot be measured.

Brand barriers refer to obstacles that prevent firms from pursuing business activities based on brands. Due to these obstacles, firms cannot pursue long-term branding strategies. A firm in the minimalist archetype has a low level of brand differentiation. The firm focuses on short-term goals like day-to-day transactions, production or selling, so inadequate marketing and branding results in more significant brand barriers, indicating a low level of brand importance. Day-to-day transactions and no long-term orientation also indicate a low level of brand intelligence. Due to substantial brand barriers, firms in the minimalist brand orientation archetype have the most inferior brand performance and orientation (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). In summary, it can be stated that the firms in the **minimalist archetype have low brand importance, brand differentiation and brand intelligence.**

The next archetype of brand orientation is embryonic brand orientation. More focus is placed on the firm's competitive advantage, differentiation, and positioning, which means the emphasis on brand orientation is higher than in minimalist firms. The firm is aware of brand orientation and has a competitive advantage. However, it is still considered optional, not critical for business success, and does not have a specific brand strategy. (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). This indicates that all **three constructs** for the **embryonic archetype** will be higher than minimalist firms but still at a **low/medium level.**

Integrated brand orientation is the next and the topmost tier of brand orientation archetypes. Brand differentiation is more as compared to the embryonic archetype. The understanding of brand differentiation and competitive advantage is higher than the firm's competitors. The brand is considered an essential element of business and not something optional. Branding has a broader role in the implementation of the marketing mix. A more comprehensive range of promotional tools is used, which include more branding elements. (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Since branding is central to these firms, the firms in **the Integrated brand-orientation archetype will have a high level of all three constructs.**

Table 2: Brand-orientation archetypes and measurement constructs.

Archetype	Brand Importance	Brand Differentiation	Brand Intelligence
Minimalist	Low	Low	Low
Embryonic	Low/medium	Low/medium	Low/ medium
Integrated	High	High	High

The brand orientation of microbreweries will be evaluated based on the three dimensions discussed above. Depending on the level of brand orientation, the firm will be placed in one of the archetypes discussed above.

2.3. Relationship between Marketing evolution stages and Brand Orientation

Archetypes

The concept of marketing evolution stages and brand orientation archetype serves as this study's key concepts. This study tries to identify relationship between these concepts and aims to determine at what stage of marketing a firm includes elements of brand orientation and to what extent.

In stage 1 of marketing, a firm depends on its social relationships for sales and caters products to their demands. There is no promotional activity as the customers are limited and in direct contact with the firm. Products are customised according to the customer's requirements (Tyejee et al., 1983; Lam & Harker, 2015). At this stage, the strategy is more customer-oriented and caters to their needs; hence the firm is not rigid with product or brand characteristics indicating that it will not use branding as a strategy, and therefore elements of brand orientation would be absent at this stage.

In stage 2 of marketing, it is described that a firm starts looking for new customers. The owners/managers pursue marketing and focus on standardising the production line (Carson, 1985; Tyejee et al., 1983). The production line is standardised; hence, there is no customisation, unlike stage 1. As the product is standardised, it might be possible for the firms to think of branding as a strategy as product characteristics are standardised now. It is also mentioned that the firm tries to include more marketing elements. These two factors indicate that the firms at the second marketing stage might begin to include brand orientation or some aspects of it. Depending on how much they inculcate branding as a part of their strategy, they can be included in one of the brand orientation archetypes.

Literature also suggests that in a highly competitive environment, the role of market orientation increases to achieve a firm's brand orientation goals as it enhances the brand management capability of a firm. Thus, firms should continue to create customer value by collecting market data and maintaining a strong brand image (Lee et al., 2019). As discussed above in stages 3 and 4 of marketing, a firm focuses more on promotional activities like branding strategies, maintaining a customer base and gaining new customers, indicating that the firm's market orientation level increases. An organisation can be called market-oriented if its basic goal primarily is to satisfy customers' needs and wants (Urde, 1999). Meanwhile, brand orientation most significantly distinguishes growing firms from stable/declining firms (Reijonen et al.,

2012). Most studies observe a positive relationship between market and brand orientation (Reijonen et al., 2012). Another study also found that the role of inter-functional coordination increases as the firm grows (Reijonen et al., 2012). As discussed above, inter-functional coordination is only achieved at stage 4 of marketing (Tyebjee et al., 1983). It is also stated that being brand-oriented is a plus for organisations, and brand orientation cannot occur without market orientation (Urde, 1999). This discussion indicates that it can be expected that the brand orientation archetype of a firm will increase as the marketing stage increases.

This section leads to two hypotheses-

H1- *The firms will start being brand-oriented only once they have reached stage 2 of marketing evolution.*

Despite this discussion, it can be argued that firms at stage 1 are already market-oriented as they have a precise understanding of their customer's requirements and hence serve their target segment with a high level of customisation. Despite this understanding, the marketing approach is still reactive. The firm is not looking for new customers or ways to attract other customers; hence it can be stated that the marketing is good, and promotion is not required, but the firm is not entirely market-oriented yet. In this study, we might observe that stage 1 firms already have a brand and use it as a critical element of their strategy. In this case, the stated hypothesis can be disproved.

H2- *A positive relationship exists between the marketing evolution stages and the brand orientation archetypes (i.e., the level of brand orientation will also increase with the increase in the marketing evolution stage)*

2.4. Possible Marketing questions of Firms

As a firm grows through the marketing evolution cycle, it will have different questions at different stages of its evolution, and its growth or its move to the next stage will also be determined by how effectively a firm can address the question present at each stage.

In his book "Ten Deadly Marketing Sins" Philip Kotler addresses major "sins" (problems) of firms which lead to ineffective marketing (Kotler, 2004). This is mainly because these firms do not get answers to several questions they might have at a particular stage of business, and they assume they are moving in the correct direction. These problems associated with the firms can also give us an indication of what kind of questions these firms might have. It is stated that the firms might not have sufficient market focus, and the signs of this might be the inability of the firm to select a target market or not being able to define their target market (Kotler, 2004). To prevent this, the firms might have questions like "What is our target market?", "Are we targeting the correct market segment?" and "Are we using the correct market segmentation method?".

The next problem is a firm's inability to be customer-oriented (Kotler, 2004). To prevent this from occurring, the firms might want to know and understand their customers better and hence have questions like "Who are our customers?", "What kind of customer service can we provide?", "What kind of incentives can we provide to our customers" and "How can our customers reach us?". Along with these to understand customers better, the firms might also have a question on how to improve their customer research or what tools to use for it. So, questions such as "How often should we conduct customer research?", "how can we improve our customer research?" and "What kind of customer analysis do we need?".

The next category of problems is associated with defining and understanding the competitors (Kotler, 2004). To counter or prevent this problem, the firms can have questions like “Who are our competitors?” (Cowling & Nadeem, 2020), “How do we gain information about our competitors” and “Who are our direct or indirect competitors?”. In a highly competitive environment, a small firm can have a dilemma if they can increase prices for their products (Cowling & Nadeem, 2020) and hence, questions can arise, such as “Can we increase the price of our products/ service?”.

Once a firm’s products or services are stable or not performing in the market, it will look for new opportunities (Kotler, 2004). At this stage, a firm can have questions like “When should we start looking for new opportunities?” and “How do we identify new opportunities?”. Innovation is also associated with new opportunities, and a firm might look to create a market niche by innovating (Cowling & Nadeem, 2020). So, a firm can have questions such as “Can our innovation create a market niche?”. As a firm grows and includes more marketing elements, developing a brand different from competitors and connecting with customers is essential. If this is not accurately done, it could result in the target population not knowing about the brand or not perceiving it to be different from competitors (Kotler, 2004). Hence, questions such as “What brand-building strategies should we use” and “How can we distinguish our brand from others?”.

As the marketing activity of the firm increases, it requires a systematic approach and marketing planning. The key indicators of a preliminary marketing plan would be a lack of logic in the plan, the financial implications of alternative plans or the lack of a contingency plan (Kotler, 2004). To prevent or counter this, a firm needs to answer questions such as “How do we carry out our marketing planning?” and “What kind of contingencies can we expect?”. The firm's growth also means increased marketing activity with more financial implications. To carry out effective marketing, it becomes essential for a firm to be coordinated and have a proper structure (Kotler, 2004). Due to this, several questions can arise, such as “What marketing tools should we invest in?”, “Do we need to reorganise our structure for implementing marketing effectively?” and “How do we position our product?”.

Using technology and the internet can be effective for SMEs or smaller firms to increase marketing and sales and allow a customer’s direct interaction with the firm. The study also suggests that technology adoption is still at a very initial stage, but COVID-19 resulted in a boom in digital marketing. It is indicated that SMEs will use more digital marketing in the coming years (Kumar et al., 2021). This indicates the importance of social media in the current scenario. Hence, the firms can have questions such as “What can we use digital marketing techniques?” and “How can we increase customer engagement through social media?”.

Based on the characteristics discussed above, the type of questions at each stage can be divided as presented in the table below:

Table 3: Type of marketing questions and question list.

Type of Question	List of Questions
Target Segment Questions	What is our target market? Are we targeting the correct market segment? Are we using the correct market segmentation method?
Customer related questions	Who are our customers? What kind of customer service can we provide? What kind of incentives can we provide to our customers? How can our customers reach us?
Customer Research questions	How often should we conduct customer research? How can we improve our customer research? What kind of customer analysis do we need?"
Competitor related questions	Who are our competitors? How do we gain information about our competitors? Who are our direct or indirect competitors? Can we increase the price of our products/services?
New opportunities and Innovation	When should we start looking for new opportunities? How do we identify new opportunities? Can our innovation create a market niche?
Brand related questions	What brand-building strategies should we use? How can we distinguish our brand from others?
Marketing planning and Reorganization	How do we carry out our marketing planning? What kind of contingencies can we expect? What marketing tools should we invest in? Do we need to reorganise our structure to implement marketing effectively?
Digital marketing and social media questions	What digital marketing techniques can be used by us? How can we increase customer engagement through social media?

2.5. Questions at different stages

As per our discussion in the previous sections, firms at stage 1 have direct relations with their customers and customize products and services according to their requirements; hence, they don't need any extra promotion. Due to this, it can be assumed that firms at this stage will have **no specific marketing questions**.

Once a firm moves to stage 2, the customer base increases and then the firm might need clarity about its target segment, who are their customers and how to serve them; hence it can be assumed that firms in **stage 2 will have questions related to the target segment and about their customers**.

It is discussed in section 2.1 that in stage 3 market might start getting saturated due to lower sales or excessive competitive forces, and hence at this stage, it can be assumed that the firms would be keen on understanding their competitors better. Along with this, firms might also look for new opportunities if they see an opportunity to penetrate or develop a new market. As discussed in section 2.2, it can be assumed that the marketing stages and brand orientation archetypes have a positive relationship, and from stage 3 of marketing, a firm might be in the embryonic brand orientation archetype. So, questions related to branding will also be prevalent for firms at stage 3, and hence, **firms at stage 3 will have questions about competitors, innovation and new opportunities and brand orientation.**

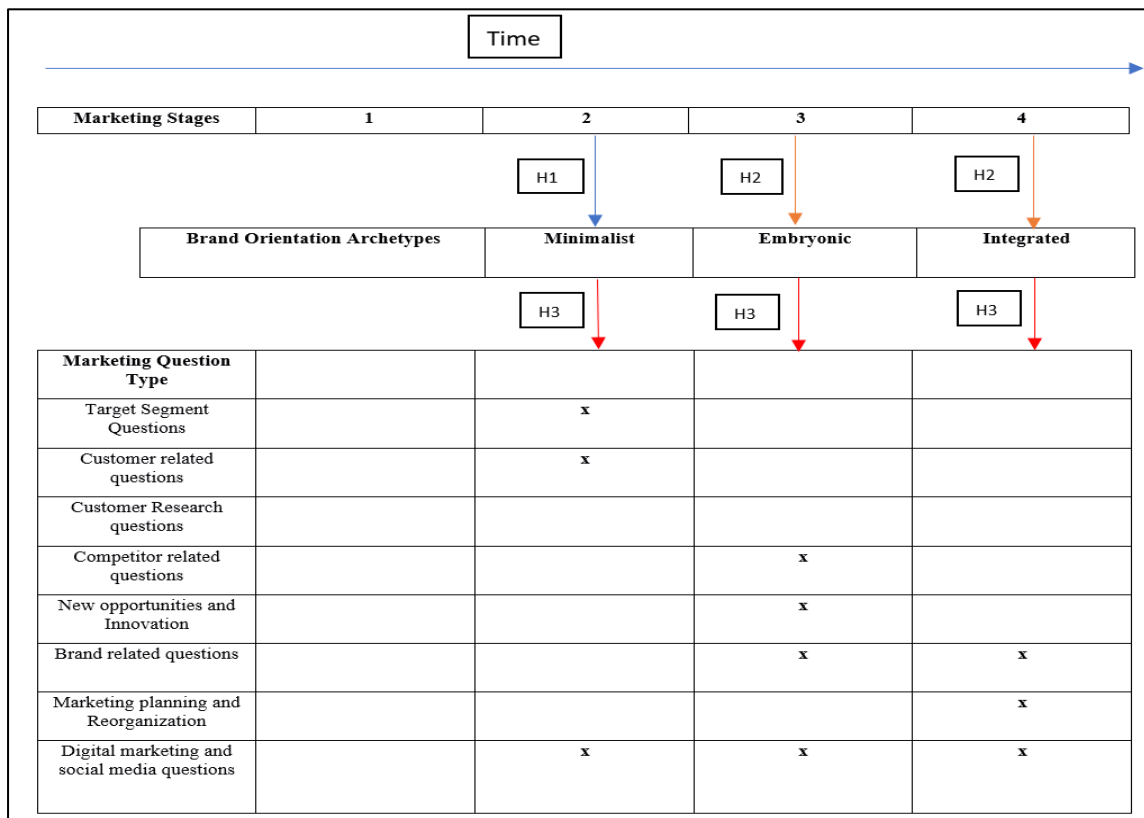
Section 2.1 discusses that stage 4 of marketing firms practices coordinated marketing and marketing determine the firm’s growth and hence, at this stage, firms will investigate planning its marketing activities and being better coordinated. It is also understood that at this stage, the level of a firm’s brand orientation will be the highest and hence the brand will be central to the strategy. So, at **stage 4, questions related to marketing planning, coordination, reorganization, and brand orientation will be key.** As discussed, internet and digital marketing are still at a very initial stage, and hence, it can be assumed that **irrelevant of any marketing stage, firms will try to explore this type of marketing and hence, firms at each stage will have questions about digital and social media marketing.**

Table 4: Marketing questions at each marketing stage.

Marketing Stage	Type of Marketing Questions
1	No marketing questions
2	Target segment questions customer related questions Digital Marketing
3	Competitors research questions New Opportunities and innovation Brand related questions Digital Marketing
4	Marketing Planning, Firm reorganization, Brand related questions Digital Marketing

This section will help identify if a firm’s marketing questions are related to the marketing stage and brand orientation archetype of a firm. This will help in answering sub-research questions 5 and 6.

2.6. Theoretical Framework



3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The research population for this research was selected as microbreweries in the Netherlands. A brewery that produces less than 15000 barrels (1 barrel = 50 litres) of beer annually and sells at least 75% of off-site is termed a microbrewery. A microbrewery usually follows a traditional three-tier sales channel, meaning the brewer sells to a wholesaler and is further sold to a retailer. The brewer can also act as a wholesaler making it a two-tier system. The sales can also directly be to the customers through carry-outs, on-site taprooms, or restaurant sales. (*Craft Beer Industry Market Segments*, n.d.). According to the chamber of commerce of the Netherlands (KvK), the number of micro-breweries doubled in 2021 from 2016 (Wedia, 2021). The study focussed on collecting data from microbreweries that sold their beer to customers in their own brand name. The beer production volume in the Netherlands remained stable at 2.4 billion litres per year in the last five years. Still, the number of craft breweries in the Netherlands grew from 165 in 2012 to 800 in 2020 (USDA Foreign Agricultural Services Report, 2021), indicating that the craft breweries' market share significantly increased, further supporting the argument for selecting microbreweries as the research population. Microbreweries exceeding 15000 barrels per year were excluded from the study.

The criteria for the selection of microbreweries were pre-set. Microbreweries that produce beer and sell their beer under their own brand names were selected for this study. Additionally, the respondent representing the microbrewery should be the individual responsible for marketing the firm. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to the organization **Stichting Erfgoed Nederlandse Biercultuur**. The organization maintains and provides information about beer culture in the Netherlands. This information is published on the organization's website (*Purpose and Origin - Dutch Beer Culture*, n.d.). They were informed about the pre-set criteria for the study. From the remaining microbreweries pool, the organisation drew a random sample, which was the final sample for the research.

3.1.1. Questionnaire Development

The first five questionnaire questions were formulated to determine the marketing stages of the microbreweries. The respondents were given seven alternatives for each question. Descriptions were given for alternatives 1, 3, 5 and 7, which resembled each marketing stage. The respondents were informed that if they identified their firm as between two descriptions, they could select alternatives 2,4 and 6. An example from the first five questions about marketing stages is given below-

Q1. What description best matches your customers?

1. Our customers are people we know personally, such as our friends and family.
- 2.
3. Our customers are people we know personally and some other customers who like our beer.
- 4.
5. Our customers are mostly people we do not know personally but have similar likes and dislikes that match our beer.
- 6.
7. Our customers are mostly people we do not know personally, and we try to match our beer with the likes and dislikes of different groups.

The purpose of the next segment of questions was focused towards identifying the firm’s level of brand orientation. Brand Importance, Brand Differentiation and Brand Intelligence were the three constructs of the scale. The constructs were taken from a recent study where a scale was developed for measuring brand orientation (Piha et al., 2021). The respondents were asked to score between 1 to 7, where 7 represented that the statement is true for the firm and the respondent strongly agreed with it, and 1 indicated the statement mentioned didn’t relate to the firm at all, and the respondent strongly disagreed with it. There were five such statements, each for brand importance and differentiation, while four were for brand intelligence. Some of the statements of the existing scale were reframed to make it understandable, even if the respondent didn’t know marketing or branding jargon. The complete questionnaire can be found in the appendix. Some example statements are mentioned below-

“Our brand is among our most valuable assets.”

“We differentiate our brand from the competition in an easily identifiable way.”

“We develop a detailed knowledge of customers’ ideas of our brand.”

The final segment of the questionnaire consisted of a list of marketing research topics. The respondent was asked if research on the given topic would benefit his/her firm. A scale of 1 to 7 was presented where 1 depicted that the respondent strongly disagreed about the relevance of the research topic for their microbrewery while 7 depicted that he strongly agreed. This further helped determine the type of marketing questions the microbreweries have, as discussed in the theoretical underpinning above.

3.2. Pre-Test

To test the validity of the questionnaire, a microbrewery in Wageningen was approached. The respondent from the firm was requested to fill out the questionnaire in a thinking-out-loud way, where feedback was collected from the respondent as he /she completed the questionnaire. Based on the feedback received, changes were made to the final questionnaire and circulated to a bigger sample for actual data collection. Feedback was mostly in relation to the way the questions were formulated to make it more clear.

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Marketing Stages

Each score selected by the respondent corresponded to a particular marketing stage which is given in the table below.

Table 5: Score distribution for marketing stages.

Score	Marketing stage
1	1
3	2
5	3
7	4

The marketing stages were measured using a 5-item scale, where each question had 7 alternatives where alternative 1 represented stage 1, 3 represented stage 2, 5 represented stage 3 and 7 represented stage 4. The remaining alternatives were for respondents who identified

their firms as between the two descriptions. The scale's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the resulting value was greater than 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability. This indicates that the scale can also be used as a single-dimensional scale.

The scale's validity was assessed using principal component analysis (PCA) with VARIMAX rotation. Two factors were extracted based on factor loadings, the first three statements which were customer related loaded on factor 1 and were labelled as marketing-customers and the last 3 statements which were marketing planning related loaded on factor 2 which was labelled as marketing-planning. The internal reliability for both these factors was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and the resulting values were greater than 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability.

A cluster analysis was conducted using the ward method using the extracted factors as input variables. Agglomeration coefficients were used as a measure of dissimilarity between clusters. The maximum percentage difference in agglomeration coefficients between two consecutive steps was used to determine the optimal number of clusters. Based on this approach, three clusters were obtained. The means from these clusters were used as cluster centres for a k-means cluster analysis which eventually resulted in the final cluster centres. Post hoc tests were conducted to check if the mean differences between all three clusters were significant for both factors. Along with the final cluster centres, the absolute mean scores for all five questions across all the clusters were also calculated to get better insights into the characteristics of the three clusters.

3.3.2. Brand Orientation Archetype

A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was carried out with VARIMAX rotation to validate the scale. Three factors were obtained: Brand importance, Brand differentiation and Brand intelligence. The factor loadings were as expected for Brand Intelligence. On the contrary, instead of the first four statements, only the first two statements loaded on Brand Importance and the remaining statements were a part of Brand Differentiation. Internal reliability for each factor was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and internal reliability was good for each factor with an alpha greater than 0.7. A cluster analysis was conducted using the ward method with the three factors as input, and three clusters were identified using a similar approach as discussed for the marketing stages. This was followed by a k-means cluster analysis through which final cluster centres were obtained. Absolute mean scores across all statements were examined. The pre-determined criteria were that a score of less than 2 for at least two constructs would mean that the firms are not brand oriented, a score between 2 and 4 would mean the firms are in the minimalist brand orientation archetype, between 4 and 6 Embryonic archetypes and above 6 integrated archetypes. It is important to note that average scores were used for this distinction and not factor scores. Post hoc tests were conducted to assess the significance of mean differences across all clusters for all the factors.

3.3.3. Relation between Marketing Stages and Brand orientation Archetype

Firstly, both the marketing stage and brand orientation scales were considered single-dimensional as the internal reliability was high for both scales even if only one factor was considered, and the correlations between these single-dimensional scales were tested. To get more insight into the reason behind the relationship between the two concepts, correlations between all the factors were tested to understand which factors are the reason for the relationship between the two concepts. After this, the marketing stage clusters, and the brand

orientation clusters were subjected to a cross-tabulation to check if the brand orientation of firms also increased with the marketing stages. A chi-square test was conducted along with the likelihood ratio, to confirm the association between these concepts.

3.3.4. Marketing Questions

Once the relationship between the marketing stages and brand orientation was confirmed, combined clusters were formed using all 5 factors of both concepts, and three clusters were obtained. ONE-WAY ANNOVA was conducted to check for which marketing research questions the mean differences were significant between clusters. This was followed by post hoc tests to understand between which clusters the significant differences exist. Absolute mean scores were calculated across all clusters for each question to get a better understanding of the interest of microbreweries in a specific type of marketing research at a specific marketing stage and brand orientation.

4. Results

4.1. Marketing Stages

Table 6 represents the final cluster centres for the marketing stages. The clusters have been rearranged and renamed to represent the marketing stages. The results of an ANOVA test depicted significant differences in cluster centres for both the factors, Marketing-customers ($F= 44.35, p<0.001$) and Marketing-planning ($F=40.80, p<0.001$). A post hoc test also depicted that mean differences for both the factors marketing-customers and marketing-planning across all clusters were significant ($p<0.001$), with one exception. The difference in mean between stage 1 and stage 2 for marketing planning was insignificant.

Table 6: Final cluster centres for Marketing Stages and sample size in each cluster.

	Stages		
	1	2	3
Marketing-customers	-2.78	-0.18	0.67
Marketing-planning	-1.12	-0.54	0.97
N	3	21	31

The cluster centres depicted a higher mean score for stage 3 than for stages 1 and 2 for both marketing-customers and marketing-planning. This effect was further analysed by checking the absolute mean scores for marketing stage questions across the 3 stages, which is represented in Table 7. According to the theory, firms can be divided into 4 marketing stages. As discussed in the methodology, each alternative for the marketing question represents a particular marketing stage and only a score above 6 represents that a firm is in stage 4 of marketing. As it can be seen in Table 7, none of the stages has an average score above 6 for any question, which represents none of the firms in this study was in stage 4 of marketing and hence, the given clusters represented stage 1, stage 2, and stage 3 of marketing.

It is also evident from Table 7 that stage 1 has the lowest absolute scores for all questions, while stage 3 has the highest absolute scores. The first two questions represented the factor marketing-customers, while the last three represented marketing-planning. The average mean scores for these stages are close to those described earlier for stages 1,2 and 3. Despite this, it can be observed that these scores are not the same across all questions for both factors. Firms in stage 1 scored higher for “the organisation of marketing activities” than on the other questions, depicting they have some “ad hoc” marketing activities. Similarly, the average score for “production” for firms in stage 2 is low compared to the other questions which depicts that these firms have not really moved ahead with respect to their production. The firms in stage 3 have uniform scores, which are close to 5.0, and hence, these firms have reached stage 3 with respect to all elements of the marketing stages.

Table 7: Mean scores for Marketing Stages across all clusters.

	Stages		
	1	2	3
Marketing-customers			
Customer Description	1.00	5.29	5.86
Knowledge about customers	1.00	3.26	4.86
Marketing-planning			
Promotional tools used.	1.00	2.65	4.81
Production	1.00	1.77	4.57
The organisation of marketing activities	2.33	2.65	5.33

4.2. Brand Orientation

Table 8 represents the final cluster centres for brand orientation and the sample size of each cluster. The clusters have been rearranged and renamed in increasing order of their cluster centres. The clusters have been divided in archetypes based on the pre-set criteria discussed in the methodology. Cluster 1 is the minimalist brand orientation archetype, cluster 2 is in the beginning stage of the embryonic archetype, and hence, it is labelled as embryonic-1, while cluster 3 is the cluster with firms with a higher level of brand intelligence and hence they are more brand-oriented than firms in cluster 2 despite being in the same Embryonic brand orientation archetype, and it is labelled as embryonic-2. The results of an ANOVA test depicted significant differences in cluster means for all three factors, Brand Importance ($F=36.18$, $p<0.001$), Brand Differentiation ($F=20.78$, $p<0.001$) and Brand Intelligence ($F=65.97$, $p<0.001$). The post hoc test, in this case, depicted that the mean difference for Embryonic-1 and Embryonic-2 are insignificant for brand importance and brand differentiation, while the mean differences are insignificant for Minimalist and Embryonic-1 for brand intelligence. This depicts that the main difference between the two clusters, Embryonic-1, and Embryonic-2, is because Embryonic-2 scores higher in brand intelligence than Embryonic-1.

Table 8: Final cluster centres for Brand Orientation Archetypes and sample size in each cluster.

	Brand Orientation Archetypes		
	Minimalist	Embryonic-1	Embryonic-2
Brand Importance	-0.89	0.80	0.52
Brand Differentiation	-0.79	0.48	0.65
Brand Intelligence	-0.68	-0.40	1.22
N	21	16	13

The results obtained from the cluster centres were further analysed using absolute mean values for the brand orientation statements. Table 9 represents the absolute mean values for brand orientation statements across the 3 clusters. It is important to remember that the first 2 statements represent “Brand Importance” while the last 3 statements represent “Brand Intelligence”. This division is based on the factor loadings, while based on the original scale the first 4 statements belongs to brand Importance” instead of 2. All the other statements represent “Brand Differentiation”. The average mean scores are the lowest for all the

statements for the minimalist brand orientation archetype. The scores for Embryonic-1 and Embryonic -2 are like each other for all the statements except the last 3 statements which belong to brand intelligence. This further confirms the cause for disparity amongst these two clusters. The firms in the Embryonic-2 cluster score higher for brand intelligence than the other two archetypes while both the other archetypes have a lower score for all the three brand intelligence statements.

Table 9: Absolute mean scores for Brand Orientation archetypes across all clusters

	Brand orientation Archetypes		
	Minimalist	Embryonic-1	Embryonic-2
Brand Importance			
Brand amongst most valuable assets.	2.52	6.07	5.37
The company exists only because of brand.	3.33	5.76	5.50
Branding is a top priority.	2.14	4.15	4.37
Brand is much more than a name and a logo.	2.19	4.46	4.56
Brand Differentiation			
Brand has unique characteristics compared to competitors.	4.71	6.53	6.37
Brand differentiated from customers in an easily identifiable way.	3.57	5.15	5.56
Brand makes us superior to competitors.	2.38	4.69	4.81
Create a brand with a unique identity.	4.38	5.92	6.12
Clearly defined brand core values.	3.33	4.15	5.25
Brand Intelligence			
Periodically monitor customers' ideas about competing brands.	1.76	1.84	3.93
Develop a knowledge of customers' ideas about our brand.	1.76	2.15	4.68
Frequently obtain market information to build a brand.	1.47	2.07	3.87

4.3. Relationship between marketing Stages and Brand Orientation

Table 10 depicts the correlation between marketing stages and brand orientation where a single factor solution is selected for both scales; hence, both are single-dimensional. A significant and positive correlation ($r = .502$, $p < .001$) was obtained between both these concepts indicating a direct linear relationship.

Table 10: Correlation between single-dimensional scales for Marketing Stages and Brand Orientation

		Marketing Stages	Brand orientation
Marketing Stages	Correlation	1	.502
	Significance		<.001
Brand orientation	Correlation	.502	1
	Significance	<.001	

Table 11 represents correlations between 2 factors of marketing stages with 3 factors of brand orientation. The results depict that the 2 factors for marketing stages, marketing-customers and marketing-planning, are significantly and positively correlated with each other ($r = .459$, $p < .001$). Brand Importance and Brand differentiation ($r = .573$, $p < .001$), Brand Differentiation and Brand Intelligence ($r = .503$, $p < .001$) and Brand Importance and Brand Intelligence ($r = .463$, $p < .001$) are significantly and positively correlated with each other, and hence, the 3 factors for brand orientation are also significantly and positively correlated with each other.

The correlations between the marketing stages and brand orientation depict that neither of the two marketing stages factors has a significant correlation with brand importance, while marketing-customers and brand differentiation ($r = .448$, $p < .001$) and marketing-planning and brand differentiation ($r = .459$, $p < .001$) have a significant and a positive correlation. The second factor of marketing stages, marketing-planning, has a significant and positive correlation with brand intelligence ($r = .395$, $p < .01$), while marketing-customers and brand intelligence are not significantly correlated.

Table 11: Correlations between different factors of marketing stages and brand orientation archetypes.

		Marketing- customers	Marketing- planning	Brand Importance	Brand Differentiation	Brand Intelligence
Marketing- customers	Correlation Significance	1	0.45 <.001	0.21 0.13	0.44 0.001	0.14 0.31
Marketing- planning	Correlation Significance	0.45 <.001	1	0.24 0.094	0.45 <.001	0.39 0.005
Brand Importance	Correlation Significance	0.21 0.13	0.24 0.09	1	0.57 <.001	0.46 <.001
Brand Differentiation	Correlation Significance	0.44 0.001	0.45 <.001	0.57 <.001	1	0.50 <.001
Brand Intelligence	Correlation Significance	0.14 0.31	0.39 0.005	0.46 <.001	0.50 <.001	1

Table 12 represents a cross-tabulation between marketing stages and the brand orientation archetypes. In stage 1 of marketing, all the firms are in the minimalist brand orientation archetype. In stage 2, the firms are evenly distributed in all three archetypes, but firms start getting more brand-oriented at this stage. In stage 3, the maximum firms are in the Embryonic-2 brand orientation archetype, indicating that the brand orientation level also increases with the increase in the marketing stage.

The chi-square test for the cross-tabulation depicted a significant association between the marketing stages and brand orientation archetypes at a 5 % significance level ($\chi^2 = 10.335$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.035$). It can be argued that 33.3% of cells had values less than 5 indicating that the relationship depicted might not be accurate, but the likelihood ratio ($\chi^2 = 11.25$, $df = 4$, $p =$

0.024) is significant. Hence, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and an association exists between the marketing stages and brand orientation archetypes.

Table 12: Cross Tabulation between Marketing Stage and Brand orientation Clusters.

Marketing Stages		Brand Orientation Archetypes			
		Minimalist	Embryonic-1	Embryonic-2	Total
Stage 1	Count	3	0	0	3
	Expected Count	1.3	0.8	1.0	3.0
	Adjusted Residual	2.1	-1.1	-1.2	
Stage 2	Count	12	9	5	26
	Expected Count	10.9	6.8	8.3	26.0
	Adjusted Residual	0.6	1.4	-2.0	
Stage 3	Count	6	4	11	21
	Expected Count	8.8	5.5	6.7	21.0
	Adjusted Residual	-1.6	-1.0	2.6	
Total		21	13	16	50
		21.0	13.0	16.0	50.0

4.4. Marketing Questions

Since the results so far depict that an association exists between the marketing stages and brand orientation archetypes, a combined cluster analysis was conducted to get information about the type of market research questions firms are interested in as the marketing stage and brand orientation level increased. Table 13 represents the final cluster centres for all the factors of the marketing stages and brand orientation in the combined cluster. It is evident from the cluster centres that there might be some overlap, but cluster 1 represents stage 1 and the minimalist archetype, cluster 2 represents stage 2, and the Embryonic-1 archetype and cluster 3 represent stage 3 and Embryonic-2 archetype.

Table 13: Final centres for combined cluster of marketing stages and brand orientation.

	Cluster		
	1	2	3
Marketing-customers	-2.78	0.05	0.33
Marketing-planning	-1.12	-0.40	0.71
Brand Importance	-1.53	-0.28	0.53
Brand Differentiation	-2.08	-0.37	0.70
Brand Intelligence	-0.77	-0.65	0.84

Table 14 represents the information obtained from a ONE-WAY ANOVA and post hoc tests. The questions highlighted in green depict the questions for which the differences in mean were significant, as obtained from the ONE-WAY ANOVA. It also shows the clusters between which the mean differences are significant for each marketing research question as obtained from the post hoc tests. The clusters highlighted in yellow do not have significant differences

in their mean, while the cluster highlighted in blue is significantly different from other two clusters.

It also represents the absolute mean scores for all the market research questions across the 3 clusters. From the values, it is evident that the firms in cluster 1, which represents firms in stage 1 and the minimalist brand orientation archetype, have little or no interest in any type of market research. It can be inferred from the absolute mean scores that cluster 3 (stage 3 and Emryonic-2 archetype) are more interested in this marketing research as compared to the other 2 clusters. It can also be seen from the absolute mean values that all the 3 clusters showed very less interest in “Research in competition amongst microbreweries in the Netherlands” and “research on combating unexpected contingencies.” It should also be noted that despite cluster 3 showing more interest in market research, most of the scores are in the range of 4.0-5.0 and not more than that showing a moderate interest in market research and not finding it essential.

Table 14: Absolute mean scores for marketing research questions along with significant differences and significance level.

	Clusters			Significance
	1	2	3	
Research on identifying potential customer groups for microbreweries.	2.00	3.47	5.00	<.05
Research whether customers are satisfied with our beers.	2.00	4.52	5.09	
Research what services are valued by customers.	2.00	3.95	4.47	
Research on ways in which microbreweries can stay in touch with their customers.	2.00	3.39	4.90	<.05
Research on opportunities for new varieties of beer.	2.00	3.13	4.71	<.05
Research on willingness to pay for beers.	2.00	4.34	4.33	
Research on competition amongst microbreweries in the Netherlands.	2.00	2.60	3.38	
Research on important trends for microbreweries.	3.00	3.08	4.52	<.05
Research on identifying niche markets for beer.	2.00	3.04	4.38	<.05
Research on identifying tools for microbreweries to build strong brands.	2.00	3.69	5.00	<.05
Research how microbreweries can make marketing plans.	2.50	3.65	4.42	
Research on how microbreweries can do marketing activities.	2.00	4.13	5.04	<.05
Research on how microbreweries can combat unexpected contingencies.	2.00	2.95	3.23	
Research on the effectiveness of marketing tools (like advertising).	2.00	3.69	4.76	
Research on digital marketing strategies that can be used by microbreweries.	2.50	4.13	5.00	

5. Discussion

This section further projects the implications of the obtained results, limitations of this research and future research directions.

5.1. Scientific Relevance

This study focused on a threefold contribution. A scale was developed to identify the marketing stage of the firm. The relationship between marketing stages and brand orientation was empirically identified. The research also identifies the type of marketing research the microbreweries in the Netherlands are interested in, thus indicating interesting future research.

The study extended previous studies on different stages of marketing (Lam & Harker, 2015; Tyebjee et al., 1983; Carson, 1985) by providing a quantitative method. A scale was developed in this research to identify these marketing stages empirically, and microbreweries in the Netherlands were the research population. As discussed above, the descriptions of the scale alternatives for marketing stages match different stages. Hence, this scale also indicates how firms can move to the next stage with respect to each area of the marketing stages.

The results depicted the current marketing stage of the microbreweries that took part in this study. The main difference in stages 1 and 2 of marketing was with respect to the “marketing-customers” factor of the scale. Firms in stage 1 have personal connections as their customers, while firms in stage 2 identified a target customer group besides known customers. It is interesting to note here that the firms in stage 2 have similar scores as firms in stage 1 with respect to the “marketing-planning” factor. This depicted that though the firms in stage 2 have a target customer group, the marketing is not organised, and the activities are “ad-hoc”, which is like stage 1. The “marketing-planning” factor is the main point of difference between the firms in stage 2 and stage 3; the firms in stage 3 have a higher level of organisation of marketing activities. The firms in stage 3 use several promotional tools, have assigned marketing personnel, and reduce the cost of production by brewing batches of beer.

Further, this research used a newly developed brand orientation scale (Piha et al., 2021) to identify the brand orientation archetypes (Wong & Merrilees, 2005) of the microbreweries and hence, identified these archetypes empirically instead of a qualitative or a case study-based approach. As expected, the firms in the minimalist archetype scored low on all three constructs, showing a low level of brand importance, differentiation, and intelligence. The results depicted that none of the firms in this study is in the integrated archetype. Clusters 2 and 3 are identified as the Embryonic archetype showing a similar level of brand importance and differentiation, higher than minimalist firms. The firms in cluster 3 are more brand oriented than those in cluster 2 as they have a higher level of brand intelligence, particularly with respect to developing the knowledge of their customers’ ideas about their brand. This finding is in line with the findings of Ogansunya et. al. who found that for a brand to be successful firms should have continuous interactions with the target market. (Ogunsunya et al., 2020).

It was identified through this study that the concepts of marketing and brand orientation are related to each other, contributing to the limited research in this field. The results depicted that as the marketing stage increased, the level of brand orientation also increased for most firms. Brand-centric firms add a strong dose of market focus and evolve into brand and market-oriented firms. (Urde et al., 2013). An interesting observation here is that despite the 2 concepts being related to each other, some factors are not related to each other. Hence, it can be argued

that the relationship between marketing stages and brand orientation exists mainly because of the relationship between the marketing-customers and marketing-planning with brand differentiation and the relationship between marketing-planning and brand intelligence. As brand importance was not related to any marketing factors, it depicted that it had no contribution to the outcome of the relationship. As the marketing-planning increases, a firm's marketing activities are more organised. This explains why firms would be more proactive in identifying the performance of their brand hence the marketing planning and brand intelligence factors are related to each other. It is stated in the literature that market-oriented firms add strong branding to project a greater degree of difference and hence, strive to become brand oriented. (Urde et al., 2013). Hence, firms use the brand as a tool to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

This effect was also seen in the section about interest in marketing research questions, where it was seen that only the firms in cluster 3 (stage 3, Embryonic-2) showed interest in marketing research questions as the level of marketing-planning and brand intelligence is higher for these firms. Hence, these firms are interested in research. It is important to note that microbreweries in this cluster have shown a similar level of interest for all questions and have no particular preference. Since the firms are not in stage 4 or the integrated archetype, the motivation to get marketing research is not very strong.

5.2. Managerial Implications

This study gives a practical approach to a firm's managers, owners or marketing experts to identify their current marketing and branding activities. The scales of this study indicate the next steps for firms to move up in the marketing and brand orientation ladders. For firms in stage 1 to grow, it is important to identify a target customer group apart from their personal connections; this would enable them to the next stage. The firms in stage 2 understand their target customer group, but the internal organisation of marketing activities is ad hoc and not organised and the production strategies still match with stage 1. To move to the next stage, these firms need to assign the marketing activities to an individual for better organisation of activities so that the promotional tools can be used in a planned manner. Once the customer base increases the stage, microbreweries can think of other production strategies like producing bigger batches to cut costs. For the firms in stage 3, the next steps of progression are reaching out to more customer groups through planned marketing campaigns. The marketing activities are already organised up to an extent, but they could be further enhanced by improving the integration between different parts of the firm, like production and marketing. Thus, this study provides an approach through which smaller firms can improve their marketing step-by-step without using conventional marketing methods, which require more resources.

Similarly, this study also identifies the brand orientation level of firms and indicates where they lack and how they can be more brand oriented. Firstly, minimalist firms need to be informed about the importance of branding, and once their own brand importance increases, the focus on other constructs can be taken into account. The next archetype is the Embryonic firms divided into 2 sub-groups. Both these groups had a similar level of brand importance, but the difference between these groups was mainly related to brand intelligence. The Embryonic-2 firms were more aware of customers' ideas of their brand, which was not the case for Embryonic-1 firms, and to be more oriented, these firms can think of ways of getting this information. Finally, for these firms to move to the top tier, they need to get keen intelligence of their brand perception and their competitors' brand perception. Once firms identify this, they will better understand

how to position their products to increase their uniqueness compared to their competitors, enabling them to move to the Integrated archetype.

As both these concepts and some of their constructs are related, growth in the marketing stage will result in an increase in brand orientation level and vice versa. Good knowledge about customers would enable firms to understand better their requirements, which would lead to the positioning of their brands specific to their customers and hence, separate them from their competitors. Also, knowing customers' opinions of their beer compared to their competitors' beers would indicate if the marketing activities were correctly targeted to customers' preferences. This is how the interrelation between individual factors of both these scales interact in a practical environment.

The study further attempted to identify areas of marketing research in which firms of different stages are interested. The results depicted that a preference for specific questions does not exist for firms at any stage. However, the interest in marketing research increases as the marketing stage of the firms increases, indicating the importance of marketing research for these firms.

5.3. Limitations & Future Research

The scale developed for measuring the marketing stages was developed keeping microbreweries in mind, and hence, the scale cannot be directly used for another sample population as it is. The scale needs to be changed in the context of the specific industry. This study measures brand orientation with reference to 3 constructs Brand Importance, Brand Differentiation and Brand Intelligence. Several other studies have defined brand orientation with some other constructs, like brand performance. For example, another study identifies brand orientation comprised of brand values, norms, and artefacts (Osakwe et al., 2020). This study does not measure brand orientation with respect to these constructs. A separate method or scale needs to be developed to accommodate these constructs of brand orientation. The relationship between marketing stages and brand orientation with respect to other brand orientation constructs is not covered in this study.

Due to the selection of smaller firms "micro" firms, none of the firms was in stage 4 of marketing or the integrated brand orientation archetype, so it remains to be verified if the relationship between both these concepts extends to the last stage as well.

The study fails to identify the specific area of interest for firms at a particular stage, so it does not indicate a clear list of research topics which are more interesting to the microbreweries than others. Despite this limitation, this study is a step forward in understanding the relationship between marketing and brand orientation and gives a direction for future research.

Using the scale developed in this research as a reference, a scale can be developed which can be applicable to all firms in any industry. This study identified several factors/ constructs for marketing stages and brand orientation; a future opportunity can be in-depth research on the intricate nature of the relationship between each of these constructs and its practical implications. The relationship between marketing stages and brand orientation needs to be evaluated with respect to other definitions and constructs of brand orientation. Based on the characteristics of firms identified for each stage and brand orientation level a study can be conducted to determine a more holistic approach for firms at each stage to grow to the next marketing stage and get more brand oriented. As both the concepts are related to each other further research should be conducted to identify if both these concepts can be combined into a

single scale for an easier understanding of the current stage of the firm. Research should be conducted with firms in stage 3 and Emryonic-2 archetype to further identify the specific area of interest for marketing research since these were the only firms that showed an interest in any marketing research.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study depicted that the microbreweries that took part in this study belonged to the first 3 marketing stages, and none of the microbreweries is in stage 4 of marketing. Similarly, 3 clusters were obtained for brand orientation, but it was observed that none of the firms is in the integrated (top tier) brand orientation archetype. A 5-point scale was developed to measure the marketing stage of microbreweries. It identified that firms start including some elements of brand orientation at stage 1 itself, and hence, it is not necessary for firms to reach stage 2 to start being brand oriented. Further, the study successfully determined that the concepts of marketing stages and brand orientation are related to each other. Along with this, the study also indicated the relationship between individual factors of marketing stages and brand orientation providing a future direction for research.

The last part of this research focussed on the marketing research questions. It was identified that only the microbreweries in stage 3 and Embryonic-2 were interested in marketing research, while the other groups did not show any interest in marketing research. The microbreweries showed similar interest in all types of marketing research and not any specific group of questions. Further research is required to understand the relationship between both these concepts with respect to other constructs of brand orientation. A future research direction can be understanding the relationship between the individual factors of marketing stages and brand orientation. In conclusion, hypothesis 1, stating that brand orientation only begins once firms have reached stage 2 of marketing, was disproved, as firms already include some elements of brand orientation in stage 1 and hypothesis 2, that the concepts of marketing stages and brand orientation archetypes are directly related, was proved to be true.

8. References

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8. Appendix

8.1. Questionnaire

Kindly select the alternative from the given options that best describes your firm. If you identify your firm as somewhere between two descriptions, select the blank alternative in between.

Marketing Stage Questions

Q1. What description best matches your customers?

- 1- Our customers are people we know personally, such as our friends and family.
- 2-
- 3- Our customers are people we know personally and some other customers who like our beer.
- 4-
- 5- Our customers are mostly people we do not know personally but have similar likes and dislikes that match our beer.
- 6-
- 7- We have information about groups of customers with different likes and dislikes to whom we adapt our beers.

Q2. Which of the following description best matches your knowledge about your customers?

- 1- We personally know our customers.
- 2-
- 3- We have customers whom we know personally but we also want to know new customers.
- 4-
- 5- We have information about the group of customers who buy our beer and their common characteristics.
- 6-
- 7- We have information about more than one customer group who would like to buy our beer because of their common likes/dislikes.

Q3. Which description best matches the promotional tools used by your firm?

- 1- We promote our beers via personal communication to our customers.
- 2-
- 3- Our customers refer our beer to other customers.
- 4-
- 5- We use several tools such as TV or radio advertisements, websites, social media or blogs.
- 6-
- 7- We have integrated marketing campaigns, including several tools such as TV or radio advertisements, websites, social media or blogs.

Q4. Which of the following best describes the production of your firm?

- 1- We make small batches of beer matching individual customers' likes and dislikes.
- 2-
- 3- We reduce the costs of making batches of beer.
- 4-
- 5- We reduce costs by brewing big batches of beer.
- 6-
- 7- We reduce costs by increasing the production capacity of our brewery.

Q5. Which of the following description matches the way you organize marketing activities?

- 1- We don't have marketing activities.
- 2-
- 3- We have some ad hoc marketing activities.
- 4-
- 5- We have one person doing marketing activities.
- 6-
- 7- We have one person coordinating marketing activities who works closely together with people responsible for production, logistics, finance etc.

Brand Orientation Archetype questions

Read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree with the statement. These statements were presented with a 7-point scale where 1 represented the firm strongly disagree and 7 means that the firms strongly agree.

1. Our brand is among our most valuable assets.
2. We believe that branding is one of the most important ways to be successful.
3. Our company exists only because of our brand.
4. Branding is a top priority in our company.
5. For us, a brand is much more than a name and a logo.
6. We make sure our brand has unique characteristics compared to competitors.
7. We differentiate our brand from the competition in an easily identifiable way.
8. Our brand makes us superior to competitors.
9. We create a brand with a unique identity.
10. We have clearly defined our brand's core values.
11. We periodically monitor customers' ideas about competing brands.
12. We develop a detailed knowledge of customers' ideas of our brand.
13. We frequently obtain market information to figure out how to build our brand.
14. We have continuously asked our employees about their ideas regarding our brand

Marketing Questions

Which of the following research topics from the list will benefit your firm the most? Your responses will be used to select topics for future research by university students. On the following 7-point scale, if you agree that the research topic is relevant for your firm, where 7 depicts that you strongly agree that the topic is relevant and 1 means you strongly disagree with the relevance of the topic for your firm.

1. Research on identifying potential customer groups for microbreweries.
2. Research on whether your customers are satisfied with your beers.
3. Research on what services customers of microbreweries value.
4. Research on ways in which microbreweries can stay in touch with customers.
5. Research on opportunities for new varieties of beers.
6. Research on willingness to pay for beers of microbreweries.
7. Research on competition among microbreweries in the Netherlands.
8. Research on important trends for microbreweries
9. Research to identify niche markets for beer.
10. Research identifying tools for microbreweries to build strong brands.
11. Research on how microbreweries can make marketing plans.
12. Research on how microbreweries can do marketing activities.
13. Research on how microbreweries can combat unexpected contingencies.
14. Research on effectiveness of marketing tools (such as advertising) for microbreweries.
15. Research on digital marketing strategies which can be used by microbreweries.

8.2. Syntax

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RELIABILITY

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RELIABILITY

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QUICK CLUSTER Brandorientation

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```

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```
FACTOR
```

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```
CORRELATIONS
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CROSSTABS
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```

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