

# Raging debate between symbolic- interpretivism and modernism

[Politics](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The two perspectives of organizational theory are totally different and as seen from the foregoing paragraphs, these perspectives can be used to analyze, investigate or even diagnose an organization.

Behind the epistemological stances of the two organizational perspectives there lurks an irresolvable debate on their conflicting ontologies: symbolic-interpretivists examines truth or meaning in knowledge as a subjective phenomenon whereas the modernists are more oriented to the ontological supposition of objectivity when dealing with meaning and this does not only assure the scientific process enshrined in the modernism ideals but also wards away subjectivity thus preventing it from entering into their science (Neal et al, 2000). Coca Cola and Modernism

Kant, Descartes and Locke are believed to be among the supporters of modernism in which the following ideals are embraced:

- Superstition is replaced with reason in almost every activity and situation that occurs in an organization.
- The environment is controlled mainly through scientific knowledge which entails objectivity as opposed to subjectivity
- Human progress can be credited to the objective scientific knowledge
- The modern organization should at all times strive to remain objective and use reason and shelve away superstition and prejudice which are not only subjective but also harmful to organizational functions.

Most of the above enumerated modernism ideals are embraced by Coca Cola in most of its activities. However, in its advertisements, it has often lacked the modernism touch because it appeals to personalities and superstitions which demonstrate a considerable break from reason. From the early ages

coca cola has used film stars, singers and other celebrated celebrities  
<https://assignbuster.com/raging-debate-between-symbolic-interpretivism-and-modernism/>

especially in US to influence people to buy its brands. In this move seen as an effort to the establishment of brandpersonality, is aimed to influence the consumers to identify with the soft drinks which are favorite only to the celebrated celebrities.

Further, Coca Cola also advertises mainly through sponsorships in which it has shown consistency since the mid 20th century. Coca Cola has not only sponsored the 2004-5 English Football League but also NBA and NASCAR championships, 2008 Beijing Olympics and the UEFA Soccer Championship. These kinds of advertisement approaches do not in any way appeal to reason. Coca Cola and Symbolic Interpretivism Symbolic Interpretivism as opposed to modernism: • Defies the ideals of modernism and objective science • Not only applies ethnographic but also interpretive approaches to organizations.

- Symbolic Interpretivism exposes multiple interpretations of organizational members.
- Symbolic Interpretivism highlights the function of context in interpretation and shaping of meaning

Besides the advertisements made by Coca Cola, other activities such as the corporate social responsibility not only demonstrate the organization's social 'give-backs' but also highlights the subscription of Coca Cola to the Symbolic Interpretivism ideals. Almost in all the occasions in which Coca Cola carried out its social responsibilities it first carefully considered the social or even the political context in which the organization (Coca Cola) is based.

Corporate Social responsibility often demonstrates what an organization stands for, what its goals are and what general social and moral ideals it subscribes to. For example, in an effort to address poverty alleviation in Africa

Coca Cola committed itself to scale up its network in Africa with the aim of <https://assignbuster.com/raging-debate-between-symbolic-interpretivism-and-modernism/>

establishing 1, 300 to 2, 000 new distribution businesses which are independent and consequently creating about 5, 300 and 8, 400 jobs and thus contributing more than \$520 million in revenues to the African economies (Coca Cola, 2007/2008 Sustainability Review, p50).

This is true commitment to social responsibility in which it interpreted the African context to affirm its goals and objectives in the region. Such a corporate social responsibility venture demonstrates a true Symbolic Interpretivism ideal in which an organization bases strongly on the social, economic, political and cultural context in its interpretation of meaning. Further, the venture is an indication of how multiple interpretations of people (individuals or groups), cultures and subcultures merge to create a formidable social organizational reality which determines the operations and success of the organization in question.

Finally, the venture is an observation of social issues as international concerns. For example, poverty is not only limited to Africa despite the fact that it is widespread there. By Coca Cola committing to alleviate poverty in the continent they seek to prove the most fundamental Symbolic Interpretivism stance which fosters cooperation among people within the same culture to not only call things by same names but also synchronize their efforts to solve issues and problems bedeviling them. Technology and Coca Cola

In order for Coca Cola to stay ahead of the soft drink manufacturers and distributors, it did not only harness but also fuelled technological advancements and innovations. The technology ranged from pioneered methods of treating and preparing ingredients to development of a distinct <https://assignbuster.com/raging-debate-between-symbolic-interpretivism-and-modernism/>

shape for the Coca Cola bottle (Petroski, 2006). Technologically, Coca Cola has continued to embrace new innovations which it adopts to its operations either in marketing, transportation, communication, human resource management etc.

The use of technology has made the company to stay ahead of the market especially in as far as responding to consumer concerns. For instance, in 2003 the Indian NGO, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) based in New Delhi claimed presence of pesticide residues such as DDT, malathion, chlorpyrifos and lindane in the aerated waters used by Coca Cola to prepare its soft drinks. The residues were 30 times more than the European Union's regulated levels.

Coca-Cola in its response evoke objectivity by saying that its plant water filters were designed to remove potential contaminants and its brands were tested for pesticides to ensure that they met minimum health standards prior to distribution (Coca Cola, 2006). In this case, the test for pesticides in the soft drinks show appeal to objectivity enabled by the technology in which the knowledge of the presence of pesticide residues are taken to be true because the results of the test can be accessed by some of the 5 senses and can also be measured.

This shows how technology helps to maintain objectivity in its operations. Coca Cola had to objectively listen to the allegations and respond in the same way it listened. Meaning can be interpreted in a number of ways depending on which perspective one subscribes to. Anything that can be accessed by the 5 senses can be use as knowledge to help defend and prove what one claims to know. Organizational practices more often require such <https://assignbuster.com/raging-debate-between-symbolic-interpretivism-and-modernism/>

process of ascertaining credibility and truth of information and meaning before it can use to make decisions and describe policies used to rate its performance and that of its employees.

One can imagine what would happen if such information and meaning used in decision making and policy construction could be wrong, prejudiced, biased or subjective; the image of the organization will be questionable thus affecting the performance of its market brands which are obviously connected to the organization's corporate image. Secondly, the organization will spend most of its time in disputes with community, stakeholders or even the employees when such time could otherwise be channeled to positive activities and ventures if the meaning is retched through a competitively objective research methodology.

Finally, even when the organization struggled to redeem its image it should not resolve top cheap and unfounded propaganda masqueraded to be formidable and meaningful information used in debate. However, it is important to note that both the modernists and the Symbolic Interpretivists have their highs and downs in their search for meaning. Therefore it is up to the organization to choose the appropriate approach to use depending on the nature and complexity of the issue at hand. References

Andrzej Huczynski and David Buchanan Organizational Behavior: an Introductory Text, Fourth Edition Hatch, 2006: Organization Theory: Modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press  
Pugh Derek, 1997: Organization Theory: Selected Readings Penguin books, pp126-9  
Lex Donaldson, 1985: In Defense of Organization Theory: A Reply to

the Critics CUP Archive Publishers, pp 156-8 Bizhelp24, 2008: Motivation in the Workplace retrieved on 10th Jan 2009 from <http://www.bizhelp24.com/employment-and-personal-development/motivation-in-the-workplace-2.html>

Coca-Cola website, 2006: Coca-Cola Addresses Allegations Made about Our Business in India. Retrieved January 10th 2009 from <http://www.google.com/gwt/n?u=http://www.coca-colaindia.com/faqs/myths-facts.asp> Petroski Henry, 2006: Success Through Failure; The Paradox of Design, Princeton University Press, p79-82 Russell Raymond, 1985: Sharing Ownership in the Workplace, SUNY Press, pp 171-3

Repko Allen, 2008: Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory, SAGE Publishers, pp98-102 Adcock et al, 2001: Marketing: Principles and Practice, Financial Times/Prentice Hall, pp 13-5 Daft Richard, 1995: Organization Theory and Design, West Publishing Co. , pp3-9 Madura Jeff, 2000: Introduction to Business, South-Western College Publishers, pp227-8 Morgan Nicholas, 1993: Marketing Brands; In Food and Drink, Routledge Publishers, p211 Business Week, 2006: McGraw-Hill, p40 Neal et al, 2000: Handbook of Organizational Culture & Climate SAGE Publishers, pp257