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## Preface

Customers play a particularly important role in the company's operations. They provide companies with cash incomes and other values. The values delivered by customers help companies to deepen their relationships with other market participants, such as shareholders, suppliers, or employees. As a result, customers start to be perceived as a company's asset, the value of which can be measured and maximised. Hence, customer relationship-oriented actions become a condition for the company's development, value increase, and improvement of income level.

Changes in management theory and practice are accompanied by technological and social transformations. Application of modern technologies, including the Internet, gives a new dimension to relationships between customers and companies. In contrast to traditional mass media, the Internet became a space which offers the possibility of multi-sided communication, information search, transaction making, and even value co-creation. Consequently, the role of the Internet in building relationships between the company and customers becomes more and more pronounced, since it helps to acquire tangible benefits, such as decreasing costs or acquiring new customers.

Merging of the two areas customer relationships and the Internet presents an important challenge for companies. Its main purpose is to elaborate stable and profitable customer relationships often on new markets, inaccessible in any other way. Companies willing to engage in such an activity have to display an innovative approach, adjusted to the challenge of building value based on a particularly valuable asset: the customers.

In the monograph entitled *Marketing Theory: Evolution and Evaluation*, Sheth Gardner and Garrett (1988: 5) argue that marketing rests inexorably on two pillars: thorough understanding the consumer needs and behaviour; and critical analysis of opportunities for competitive advantage. The thematic area of this book will be centred mainly on the second pillar. The book seeks to answer the question how customer value to company (customer lifetime value) should be managed on the Internet, and more specifically, how to incorporate the Internet in the process of delivery of proposed value to customer in order to increase their lifetime value and thus increase the value of the company and generate value to the company's shareholders and other stakeholders.

The main goal of this paper is to present the possibilities of Internet-based customer value management and a model describing this process. Problems of current state of knowledge of online customer needs and behaviours, associated with the first pillar, are not the main focus of the paper, for the author's intention is to concentrate on the presentation of the concept in form of a model, and not to describe current tendencies, acquired data or prognoses. This approach stems from the stand taken by Shapiro and Varian in the monograph *Information Rules: A Strategic Guide to the Network Economy*, where the authors stress that they 'seek models, not trends; concepts, not vocabulary; and analyses, not analogies' (Shapiro & Varian 1998).

Compared to numerous publications on the use of the Internet in marketing, this paper attempts rather at describing a managing approach to customer relationships than at presenting a particular tool of e-marketing. Moreover, the deliberations are not limited by branches or sectors—differences in the approach towards customer value management are perceived through the prism of different types of value exchange between the company and customers. The author believes that particular types of value exchange have a greater influence on the differentiation of actions associated with online customer value management than the type of market (B2C/B2B) on which the company operates.

Chapter 1 presents the nature of the customer value management, as well as models and concepts associated with relationship marketing. In Chap. 2, the concept of value to customer and the influence of the Internet on this element were described. Chapter 3 proposes a conceptual model of Internet-based customer value management. Finally, Chap. 4 briefly presents financial aspects of customer value management.

This publication is directed, among others, at:

- Persons responsible for customer relationship development
- Managers of all levels of company management, especially from marketing departments
- Students of widely perceived marketing, management and strategy
- PhD students and academic staff

The author will be grateful for any comments, remarks and polemics regarding the publication.

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