The Formation of Customer Loyalty Conception in the Context of the Evolution of Schools of Marketing Thought

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Abstract

The article analyzes in theoretical level the impact of development of marketing as a separate science branch on the formation of customer loyalty conception: evolution of marketing thought and trends of change of approaches are provided, the impact of ideas of different schools of marketing thought on customer loyalty conception, perception and approach is determined. The ideas and branches of relationship marketing, the attitude towards customer and his loyalty of the representatives of this school are analyzed in more detailed way.

Keywords: Customer loyalty, schools of marketing thought, relationship marketing.

Introduction

Customer loyalty promotion and relationship development as the consequence of the evolution of the marketing science has become the long-run prerogative of marketing. The beginning of the development of marketing as an independent scientific discipline is linked to the beginning of the 20th century – exactly to 1900s, when with rapid expansion and increasing productivity of industry the interest in new methods of production, new product development and sales activities, product presentation to the customers, customer buying behaviour, etc. increased as well. The opinion exists that marketing has become the discipline with potential of resolving all the business problems of the period and with ability to combine benefits and interests of producer and customer. The time period shifts are not the only factor affecting differences in meanings of marketing approaches, attention paid and their relevance. The solid and significant contribution of viewpoints of different schools of marketing thought while creating and developing marketing thought encouraged rapidity of the formation and evolution of marketing as a science.

The analysis of scientific literature reveals the usage of traditional managerial and economic principles of activity organization in marketing for a long time. These principles were: cheap production in order to achieve greater availability of products and services for a wider range of customers; and, certainly, demand stimulation by using advertising and other promotional tools in order to increase sales. This traditional point of view based on microeconomic perspective has lost its relevance in the period of marketing paradigm broadening when stepping to post-industrial era.

Research problem and relevance. The orientation shift from traditional transaction marketing towards the relationship marketing is being held as one of the major trends in recent marketing development. The opinion that relationship marketing that emphasizes affiliation of tight customer relationships and promotion of customer loyalty assures the survival of organization and competitive advantage in the market is widely maintained in modern academic and business society. In compliance with the conception of relationship marketing, the evaluation of evolution of marketing science on the basis of customer loyalty perspective becomes topicality of contemporary marketing thought. Assessment of impact of various schools of marketing thought on the attitude to customer loyalty formation is essential for better understanding of prerequisites of relationship marketing emergence and the phenomenon of customer loyalty itself.

The subject of the research is formation of customer loyalty conception in the context of the evolution of schools of marketing thought.

The aim of the research is to determine theoretically the impact of the ideas of various schools of marketing thought on the perception of customer loyalty.

The following objectives have been set:
1. To perform the theoretical analysis of evolution of schools of marketing thought.
2. To determine the approaches of various schools of marketing thought to customer loyalty.
3. To disclose the attitude of representatives of relationship marketing school towards customer loyalty.

Theoretical background of the research

In order to achieve the aim set, by referring to theoretical approaches of various authors in the article will be analyzed the evolution of marketing...
thought, will be reviewed the ideas of various schools of marketing thought, and will be determined the attitude of representatives of each school towards customer loyalty, the importance paid to this phenomenon and impact while forming it. Ideas and branches of relationship marketing will be analyzed in more detailed way by referring to precondition that customer loyalty best reflects and very often is identified as the conception of relationship marketing.

The Formation of Customer Loyalty Conception in the Evolution of Schools of Marketing Thought

The beginning of formation of marketing as a separate branch of science is considered to be the beginning of the 20th century (Sheth, Parvatiyar, 1995). Distinguishing of marketing discipline from economics was widely explained as disinterest of the representatives of the latter in market behaviour, and particularly in functions performed by the mediators (Houston et al., 1992). Nowadays when marketing as an individual discipline is climbing into the second century of its existence, various authors (Hollander et al., 2005; Shaw, Jones, 2005; Sheth, Parvatiyar, 1995; Wilkie, Moore, 2003) start to talk about its evolution.

J. N. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar (1995) in the process of formation of marketing distinguish the following three eras: preindustrial, which continued from the seventh millennium before Christ till the beginning of the 20th century, industrial (production), which began at the beginning of the 20th century and continued till the beginning of the eighties, and postindustrial, which began in the eighties of the last century and which still continues. Industrial era is divided by other authors (Shaw, Jones, 2005; Wilkie, Moore, 2003) into the following periods (see Table 1).

<table>
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<th>Table 1</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Periodization of evolution of marketing thought</strong></td>
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Note: was made by authoresses by referring to J. N. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar, (1995), W. L. Wilkie and E. S. Moore (2003), E. H. Shaw and D. G. B. Jones (2005).

At the time of preindustrial era the agricultural economics and trade of various manufactured articles had been prevailing. The role of producer was inseparable of seller. Tight and trust-based relationships tied the customer to the producer and determined production of individualized products. According to J. N. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar (1995), for the businessmen of preindustrial era it was important to retain customers and to encourage repeated procurements. This fact is proved by the practice of usage of surnames as trademarks. It was considered that surnames being used as the trademarks evoke satisfaction of customer, provide quality warranty and encourage repeated procurements at the same time. According to assertion of J. N. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar (1995), in the period of preindustrial era relationship marketing orientation was dominant.

The origin of industrial era is linked to rapid increase of mass production and mass consumption at the beginning of the 20th century. The basis of marketing (as academic discipline) have become various theories of economics, especially classic and neoclassic ones (Bartels, 1988), also German Historical and American Institutional Schools (Jones, Monieson, 1990). Besides economics (as mother discipline), representatives of management schools also brought significant impact on development of marketing as separate discipline. According to J. N. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar (1995), business became more oriented towards transactions than towards maintenance of relationships with customers. Production based on mass economy enabled producers to decrease costs and prices of products as well. Surplus of production forced the businessmen to look for new markets and created the
conditions for aggressive selling. Costs of risk and storage were transferred to such market participants (institutions) as wholesalers, suppliers and other business mediators. Therefore, the marketing thought of the early period was based on distributions and time and conception of place usefulness.

The first three schools of marketing thought were Functional, Commodity and Institutional (Shaw, Jones, 2005). *Functions* of marketing, such as distribution and exchange activity, that were performed by specialized marketing *institutions* (trading enterprises) by transferring agricultural and manufactured *commodities* from the point of supply to the place of demand, appeared to be socially beneficial and economically valuable (Jones, Shaw, 2002).

The main question of representatives of the school of marketing functions is: “What is the purpose of marketing?” According to P. D. Converse (1945), functional approach was one of the most significant in the evolution of early marketing thought. The ideas of school of marketing functions that distinguished at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century were absolutely forgotten till the end of the industrial era (Shaw, Jones, 2005). We can state that the whole experience of creation and maintenance of relationship with customers and formation of customer loyalty, which was leading for organization of preindustrial era, was forgotten during discovery of area and formation of area periods of industrial era. Philosophies of organizations oriented to production and sales passed through formation ideology of customer loyalty.

The analysis of scientific literature reveals that marketing thought of industrial era was distinctively based on transaction orientation, the representatives of various schools started to perceive the meaning and importance of customer loyalty for organization anew and to analyze it in fragments.

The representatives of *managerial* marketing school see the marketing activity from the point of view of a seller: when talking about the seller they are thinking about producer, retailer, and supplier of services or about any other representative of business or non-business. The representatives of this school concentrated on conception of “product differentiation and market segmentation, as alternative strategies of marketing” (Smith, 1956), R. J. Keith (1960) described orientation towards a consumer as essential conception of marketing, and the basis of it later became the Marketing Complex, provided by N. H. Borden (1964). The significant impact on evolution of marketing thought of managerial school was made by W. Alderson (1957), who analyzed decision making in marketing, which later was related to marketing complex.

One of the most important conceptions of representatives of school of managerial thought was understanding that repeated procurements being performed by the customers are the basis of business success, and if you want to succeed, you need to form customer loyalty (Sheth, Parvatiyar, 1995). The interest to repeated procurements performed by customers and their loyalty was turned in the years of the Second World War.

Later the behaviour of repeated procurements was researched by the representatives of school of *Buyer behaviour* (Howard, Sheth, 1969). At the beginning of distinguishing of this school the main questions being solved by its representatives were buying (search and assortment) and consumption (consumption and disposing). It was tried to separate the concepts of buyer and customer, therefore the name of the school was changed into Customer behaviour.

Evolution of marketing thought of industrial era reached critical period at the beginning of the eighties of 20c. Marketing activity of this era was based on distinctive orientation to transactions, and efficiency of activity was measured by the measures of market part, income, profitability of trademark, and conquered segments (Sheth, Parvatiyar, 1995). The need of “new” marketing, which could help to develop long lasting relationships with customers, appeared.

The period of paradigm development or, in other words, post-industrial era of marketing, began in about 1975–1980 and still continues. Managerial, Exchange and Customer Behaviour schools remained to predominate in this era (Shaw, Jones, 2005). The view of marketing splayed out from business activities to all activities of human that are related to any social exchange.

When talking about the place of customer loyalty in the marketing theory, it is necessary to distinguish the main theories of marketing and to discuss their impact on conception of customer loyalty (as separate research subject).

J. N. Sheth et al. (1988) in the evolution of marketing theories distinguish twelve schools of marketing thought. Authors classify these schools into four groups (theories), choosing perspectives of interaction (interactive / non-interactive) and economy (economical / non – economical) as the basis of classification (see Table 2). The followers of all twelve schools fairly contributed to formation of customer loyalty conception.

Marketing schools reflecting interactive processes emphasize the importance of balance between the power of buyers and sellers market. The representatives of these schools understand marketing as interactive process including relations and influence between producers, mediators and customers. At the sa-
me time at schools based on non-interactive processes this factor is ignored. Customer loyalty is thought to be the consequence of relationships between producers (sellers) and customers, therefore, its existence is analyzed by marketing schools based on interaction perspective.

The second dimension of classification of marketing schools is economical orientation versus non-economical one. Marketing schools based on economical perspective express the approach that actions of marketing participants are influenced by economic value. These schools are focused on such variables of economy as efficiency of production and supply, level of prices and customer income. At the same time the representatives of non-economical approach state that the actions of producers, mediators and customers can not be explained only with reference to economic analysis. It was stated that behaviour of market participants is influenced by social and psychological factors as well. Customer loyalty is influenced not only by economic but also by psychological and social factors, therefore we can state that its existence is acknowledged by the representatives of non-economical approach as well.

<table>
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<th>Basis of classification</th>
<th>Non-interactive perspective</th>
<th>Interactive perspective</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economical perspective</td>
<td>Commodities school</td>
<td>Institutional school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functional school</td>
<td>Functionalistic school</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional school</td>
<td>Managerial school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-economical perspective</td>
<td>Buyer behaviour school</td>
<td>School of organizational dynamics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School of activists</td>
<td>School of systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macro-marketing school</td>
<td>School of social exchange</td>
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Source: J. N. Sheth et al. (1988).

Groups of both the interactive economic and non-interactive economic marketing schools are concentrated almost exceptionally on the producer or seller of goods. Meanwhile this attitude has changed in the group of non-interactive non-economical marketing schools, by concentrating on the buyer of goods (school of buyer behavior), environment and social factors (macro-marketing and activists’ schools).

The newest marketing school group sustains the interactive non-economical theory of marketing. The supporters of this theory are considered to be the representatives of three marketing schools — organizational dynamics, systems and social exchange. The interactive non-economical theory differs from the other (interactive economical, non-interactive economical and non-interactive non-economical) in two main aspects (Sheth et al, 1988):

1. It is considered that it is equally important to understand and analyze both the buyer and the seller. Differently from the economical marketing schools (commodities, functional, region) studying the positions of market transactions from the supplier’s (producer’s, seller’s) point of view and the non-economical marketing schools (buyer behavior, activists, macro-marketing) studying market transactions from the buyer’s position, these three schools analyze mutual dependency and integrated relations between sellers and buyers in the context of market transactions.

2. At the same time these three schools refer to sciences of behavior and economics.

The interactive non-economical marketing theory has been created by three schools: organizational dynamics, systems and social exchange. Representatives of the organizational dynamics school paid more attention to the aims and needs of the supply chain representatives (producers, wholesalers and retailers) but not to the customers.

Representatives of social exchange school emphasize that more attention in marketing researches should be paid to the exchange between sellers and buyers. According to W. McInnes (1964), “the market is the social interaction of people, when the producers and buyers of economical goods and services seek to meet their needs and wishes with the help of exchange”. S. D. Hunt (1983) states that marketing is the science of behavior, by which it is striven to explain relations based on exchange. F. S. Houston and J. B. Gassenheimer (1987) present the following explanation for exchange: “the drive of exchange is meeting the needs. We express it by implementing usefulness, where the function of usefulness indicates that “the implements” are used to meet one’s needs…” As we can see the cause of exchange is the satisfaction of needs, it could be considered the grounds for satisfaction. Meanwhile satisfaction itself is one of the presumptions of customers’ loyalty.
Representatives of schools of system state that different marketing elements are related and dependent on each other. W. Lazer and E. J. Kelley (1962) distinguish the following elements of marketing systems:

1. Functionally independent marketing relations between people, forming the system and institutions: producers, wholesalers, retailers, mediators and customers.

2. Integration between individuals and organizations, necessary to maintain relations, covering the readjustment of changes, innovations, cooperation and competitiveness.

3. Determination of aims, assignments, beliefs, symbols and provisions, promoting interaction. It is expressed by determination of real marketing aims, creation of proper programmes, image, provisions, attitudes and activities.

4. Customer-oriented environment in which the interaction and relations are highlighted.

5. Marketing technologies covering means of communication, credit services, standardization and improvement of measures, marketing researches.

In distinction of these elements we could see the gems of relationship marketing schools, the object of which is the customer loyalty.

In summary it can be stated that in researches of representatives of both the system and the social exchange schools the grounds for research into the customers' loyalty as a separate marketing object appears. All the abovediscussed marketing schools belong to the marketing school group of traditional transactions.

Recently one of the most important marketing development trends is the orientation shift from the traditional transaction marketing to the relationship marketing. Instead of the orientation of traditional marketing, the ground of which is considered to be the marketing complex, the organizations more and more choose orientation of relationship marketing, the object of which is the present and potential customers. According to G. A. Wyner (1999) modern organizations seek to develop, raise and maintain profitable relations with customers.

**Customer loyalty in the context of relationship marketing school**

Formation of relationship marketing as a separate school is often explained by the contradiction of relationship marketing conception itself to the basis of classification of marketing thought schools, i.e. economical and interaction perspectives. Usage of economical / non-economical and interactive/ non-interactive perspectives best reflected the conception of transaction marketing, however, it did not suit the relationship marketing. Usage of non-economical perspective as the basis of classification did not contradict the conception of relationship marketing, however the interactiveness dimension misfit. As S. Lagro-sen and G. Svensson (2006) state, considering the essence of relationship marketing, the most appropriate ground of classification, best revealing the importance of relation, is the relative perspective (see Figure 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative perspective</th>
<th>School of relationship marketing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-economical</td>
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<td>perspective</td>
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**Figure 1.** Classification basis of relationship marketing school

The first start of relationship marketing school formation is dated 1970, however, the school of relationship marketing finally approved its conceptual provisions in 1980, when the representatives of one type of the relationship marketing schools – Scandinavian school – C. Gronroos and E. Gummesson (Gronroos, 1989; Gronroos, 1994; Gronroos, 1997; Gummesson, 1996) initiated perfection of marketing paradigm changes as the basis for their empirical researches through the grounding of creation, maintenance and development of relations between buyers and sellers.

In 1983 L. Berry presented the formulation of marketing definition, stating that relationship marketing is a strategy devoted to maintain and strengthen relations with customers. E. Gummesson (1993) defined the relationship marketing also as a strategy devoted to the control of interactions, relations and contacts. Ph. Kotler et al. (2003) expand the concept of relationship marketing by stating that relationship marketing is the creation, maintenance and consolidation of useful relations with not only the customers, but also the suppliers and society. According to the authors (Kotler et al., 2003), relationship marketing, being oriented towards the long term cooperation, strives to provide the customers with the long term value, at the same time seeking the long time satisfaction of customers. Relationship marketing becomes
the basis of customer retention. Relations of different levels – economical, social, technical and legal – are offered to customers, and that causes great loyalty of customers.

Different authors representing different trends of schools of relationship marketing emphasize different aspects of relationship marketing, usually describing them as the whole of essential principles or elements. Customers’ loyalty as the main aim of relationship marketing remains equally relevant and important at the crossing of different attitudes: all authors analyzing the elements of relationship marketing emphasize the loyalty of customers as the main constituent of relationship marketing.

H. Diller (2000), while analyzing the relation concept, defines the relationship marketing as the whole of particular principles oriented to the achievement of the main aim of relationship marketing – customer loyalty. H. Diller (2000) calls his created system of relationship marketing principles “6 i’s”, the components of which are “Information”, “Investments”, “Individuality”, “Interaction”, “Integration” and “Intention”. Taking into account H. Diller’s (2000) distinguished principles of relationship marketing and the whole meaning of principles, it is possible to state that the author refers to the ideas of Anglo-Australian relationship marketing school, emphasizing the importance of interfunctional relations and seeking customer satisfaction and loyalty through the value creation process for customers.

The schematic expression of the whole of relationship marketing principles, suggested by H. Diller (2000), is presented in Figure 2.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** The whole of relationship marketing principles

While analyzing the model formed by H. Diller (2000) we can state that relationship marketing is based on six main principles, which are interrelated and reveal the construct of relationship marketing. A customer becomes the central subject to which all marketing activity is directed. When itemizing the principles of relationship marketing we can state that firstly the company providing goods and services to the customers is interested in gathering reliable information about its customers and creating the database of customers (Ahlert, 2000). Secondly, they select only those customers who are worth investment. Not all customers have equal perspectives of future profitability, besides, not all customers equally treat the value of the same product or service. The third principle of relationship marketing is individual offer for each customer. Application of a commodity or service for individual customer becomes inseparable part of starting close relationship with that customer (Pine, 1993). The fourth and the fifth principles of relationship marketing are related to systematic communication with customers and with involvement of customers into the process of value creation. The more systematic these processes are, the closer relationship between the customers and the company exists (Kleinaltenkamp et al., 1996). The last principle of relationship marketing is distinguished by the feature that all activities discussed above must be included when trying to start such unique relationship with customers, which would distinguish the company from other competitors and would create the value desired by the customers. These special relationships between the company and the customers that are reachable after realization of all main principles of relationship marketing are called “well created” customer loyalty (Diller, 2000).

Ideas of another branch of school of relationship marketing – Scandinavian school – are noticeable in the scientific works of M. Christopher, A. Payne and D. Ballantyne (1991) and W. Nickel and M. Wood (1997). The authors emphasize the same elements of relationship marketing to be the basis of researches carried out by themselves. Those elements are conceptually close to the nature of customers loyalty – that is, the factors that create, retain and strengthen, in other words, have impact on customer loyalty. M. Christopher, A. Payne and D. Ballantyne (1991) and W. Nickel and M. Wood (1997) distinguish:
• The importance of customer retention;
• Orientation towards the benefits being provided by the product/service;
• Long-period perspective;
• Great attention to servicing of customer;
• Liability to customer;
• Close communication with customer;
• Quality as the basis of all activity.

Retention of customers by forming their loyalty, and not only attraction of new customers, becomes one of the most important objectives of relationship marketing. Identification of customers’ needs becomes the basis of customer satisfaction, especially while emphasizing the importance of servicing for conception of generally obtained quality. The attention of Scandinavian school to servicing and service quality is especially great, as this branch of relationship marketing school treats the aspect of service quality as one of the most important components in the process of creation of value for customers.

Orientation towards the benefits being provided by the product/service (but not the features of the product/service) is also explained through the process of creation of value for the customer (Gordon, 1998). A customer, when buying and using the product/service, receives certain benefit that provides possibility for satisfaction to appear. (Nickel and Wood, 1997). Long-period perspective, as well as great attention to servicing of customer, when the relationships between customers and companies develop, become a necessity when seeking customer loyalty. Orientation to development of long-lasting relationships with customers enables the companies to maximize their profits by providing the desired value to the customers.

Liability to customers is treated as one of provisions of relationship marketing that emphasizes the strength of relationships. According to E. Gummesson (1999), retention of customers is based on orientation to customer and satisfaction of his needs, and that is the liability to customer as well.

Close communication with a customer is necessary so that the customer could be involved into the process of value creation (Gordon, 1998). Close communication with customers ensures the feedback for the companies and provides valuable information for the solution of such problems as formation of customer satisfaction, retention and loyalty. In scientific works of M. Christopher et al. (1991) and W. Nickel and M. Wood (1997) the aspect of quality is mentioned as the basis of activity development of companies, very often it is met in the works of representatives of Scandinavian school. In this case, seeking quality is treated as the basis of company activity development, which creates the conditions for long-lasting, loyalty-based relationships with customers (Nickel and Wood, 1997).

Conclusions

The analysis of the evolution of schools of marketing thought that determines and distinguishes the origins and transformation of customer loyalty, enables to draw the following conclusions:

1. The process of marketing formation can be divided into three eras: preindustrial, industrial (production) and post-industrial. The relevance and meaning of customer loyalty was ambiguous in these eras.
2. Talking about the preindustrial era, the role of producer was inseparable of seller, tight and trust-based relationships linked the customer to the manufacturer. The relationship marketing orientation was dominant. The direct connection between a producer and a customer was based on trust, confidence, and cooperation. Obviously, the producer-customer relationship of the period was based on loyalty.
3. The basic idea of the industrial era is shift in orientation from individual to mass customer. The fulfilment of needs of an individual customer was clearly forgotten in the period. The stagnation streak for the formation of customer loyalty formation emerged.
4. The need for marketing encompassing managerial, customer behavioural, and transactional approaches emerged in the eighties of the twentieth century. The relationship marketing could maintain the idea Customer loyalty and its formation is the basic aim of relationship marketing, often even being equated to the relationship marketing conception.
5. The relationship marketing conception is based on non-economic and relational perspective. The conception can be considered as a strategy for maintaining and enhancing customer relationships. Various relationship marketing aspects are being highlighted by scientists, representing different branches of relationship marketing. These aspects are often named as fundamental principles of element entirety. Customer loyalty as the main aim of relationship marketing remains equally relevant and dominant in the intersection of the approaches. The scientific discussion reveals customer loyalty to be the main component of modern marketing theory – relationship marketing.
References

Vartotojų lojalumo sampratos formavimasis marketingo minties mokylų raidos kontekste

Santrauka

Vartotojų lojalumo skatinimas ir ryšių su jais užmezgimas ilgaliakėje perspektyvoje marketingo proro-gatyva tapo ilgą marketingo mokslų evoliucijos proceso pasekoje. Marketingo, kaip savarankiškos disciplinos, formavimosi pradžia – 1900 m., kai sprčiūi besivystant pramonei, augant jos produktyvumui, susidomėta naujais gamybos metodais, naujų produktų gamyba ir prekyba, prekių pateikimu vartotojams, vartotojų pirkimo elgesna ir t. t. Vyrąja nuomonė, kad marketingas tapo disciplina, kuri teigė turint potencialią išspręsti visas tuo metu egzistavusias verslo aktualias problemas be suderinti vartotojų ir gamintojų interesus. Skirtinga marketinginio aspektų reikšmę, jų traktavimą ir aktualių pokalbę ne tik nuo laiko periodo kaitos. Svarus bei reikšmingas skirtingų marketingo minties mokylų atstovų indėlis kuriant bei plėtojant marketingo mintį prisiėdėjo prie spartaus marketingo, kaip mokslas, formavimosi ir raidos proceso. Mokslinės literatūros analizė atskleidžia, kad ilgą laikotarpių marketingo mokslas rėmės tradiciniais vadybiniais ir ekonominius veiklos organizavimo principais: pigia gėmyba, siekiant gamindamas produktus / paslaugas padaryti prieinamus dėmesiu tarp gėmų ir, žinoma, paklausos stimuliuojant naudodant reklamines ir kitas skatinimo priemones, siekiant padidinti pardavimus. Šis tradicinis požiūris, besiremiantis mikroekonominė perspektyva, prrado savo aktualumą išplėtėjot marketingo paradigmai, žengiant postindustrinės eros link.

stingio būseną. XX a. 9-ajame dešimtmečiu atsirado mar-
ketingo, apimančio vadybinį, vartotojų elgisenos ir mainų
požiūrius, poreikis. Toks yra ir ryšių marketingas. Vartotojų
lojalumas yra pagrindinis ryšių marketingo tikslas, kartais
net prilyginamas pačiai ryšių marketingo koncepcijai. Ry-
šių marketingo koncepcija, besiremdama santykine ir ne-
ekonome perspektyva, apibrėžiama kaip strategija, skirta
palaikyti ir stiprinti ryšius su vartotojais. Skirtingi autoriai,
astovaujantys įvairias ryšių marketingo mokyklos kryptis,
akcentuoja skirtingus ryšių marketingo aspektus, dažniau-
sia apibūdindami juos kaip pagrindinių principų ar elemen-
tų visumą. Vartotojų lojalumas, kaip pagrindinis ryšių mar-
ketingo tikslas, išlieka vienodas bei svarbus įvai-
rių požiūrių sankirtoje. Mokslinė diskusija atskleidžia, kad
šiuolaikinėse marketingo teorijose vartotojų lojalumas ak-
centuojamas kaip pagrindinė ryšių marketingo dedamoji.

Prasminiai žodžiai: vartotojų lojalumas, marke-
tingo minties mokyklos, santykių marketingas.