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Paradigm is Changing – Will Customers Benefit?


The marketing paradigm is changing from product oriented to customer oriented. In this speech I pay attention to the benefits that this new orientation will bring to customers, and limit the scope for consumers. However the reality gives evidence, that during various changing processes customers are served even worse than earlier, and the reason behind is that all energy is required for internal activities within companies; personnel have training courses and they are busy in planning and adopting new way of working, and this is done at the expense of customers.

Customer benefits can be evaluated in various ways. Customer relationships literature discusses individualism, value creation, trust and commitment. Consumer research has described future consumers with following trends: ethical, ecological, rich in experience, seeking for variation and security oriented. These five characteristics I have picked up for evaluating how consumers can overall benefit from the changing paradigm.

Ethical issues affect strongly consumers' attitudes concerning acceptable way to do business. Moreover, ethic is often a mix of roles as a consumer, as a citizen and as a customer. Unethical operation is not necessarily a crime. Namely, in many cases companies have acted according to law, but still they are doomed by the public opinion. Ecology is connected to concern of nature and pollution. Traditional concept of nature protection has widened to genic technology, cloning and actions against natural balance. Rich in experience is materialised in fairy tales and imagination that attract consumers, but also in popularity of such services like extreme-services, traditional services, bathing, retreats and meditation. Consumers are seeking variation by belonging in various sub-cultures. They do not choose only cinema, restaurant, health club or Internet, but they will have them all, but one by one. Security orientation was reawakened at 11 September 2001, and it is clear that the terrorist attack has permanently affected consumer behaviour, which has created a great demand for all services and products that are connected to security. Also there is a need to discuss more about risk management for ordinary people.

Consumers are not similar. This calls for new ideas how to better segment consumers by utilizing the above mentioned trends in seg-

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mentation. However, one thing is common for all consumers, namely, companies have power to decide which products or services they offer in the market, and consumers are under this sway. In spite of this, I truly believe that the companies that listen consumers will have plenty of customers. ■