Preface

This book differentiates and synthesizes the contributions of the most prominent and dynamic but still not interrelated customer centric concepts of Relationship Marketing (RM), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Customer Knowledge Management (CKM), Behavioral Branding, and Cause Related Marketing. It concisely summarizes up to date knowledge on strategies epitomizing the increasing importance of customer orientation to develop competitive advantage. The reader is familiarized with the specific factors of each respective strategy as well as with their influence on organizational success (in terms of both financial and marketing performance).

In recent years, consequent customer orientation is gaining increasing momentum in the global marketing arena. Among the different management related philosophies, the marketing concept is penetrating almost every kind of business and value chain activity as well as the relationships with societal stakeholders. As a consequence, there is a growing concern in organizations to adopt and implement effective customer centric policies that result in the continuous development of new concepts and even paradigms in the marketing discipline. Apparently, the focus has shifted towards sustainable customer relationships, which have given rise to cutting-edge concepts, such as RM, CRM, CKM, Behavioral Branding, and Cause Related Marketing.

As an innovative area, very few conceptual and empirical studies, especially cross-cultural studies, have been conducted so far on the interrelationship of these concepts. In general, the synthesis of these concepts is considered to crystallize the often called for customer focus, which is the cornerstone in developing the most effective, efficient, and profitable marketing strategies for the organizations. Conclusively, the observation that these concepts have, so far, been developed in a scattered manner, calls for a book that represents a nexus of customer centric strategies to increase their effect on organizational success even more. Thus, in order to realize and fully reap the fruits of these concepts from various academic studies conducted so far, the book will preserve, interrelate, and put these concepts and knowledge in an organized and systematic way that will provide urgently required firsthand knowledge and deeper understanding to the academics as well as business and marketing practitioners. In particular, the book is expected to provide a coherent body of knowledge on the topic to the marketing educators, students, and practitioners to enhance in-depth understanding of these concepts and its concerted application for achieving the organizational financial and marketing objectives. Catering for the ongoing globalization process, this research-based book has a strong international orientation representing 47 chapter authors from 17 different countries.
Target Audience

The book serves as a high level reference to the University library, researchers, and research students. Since the topic of the book will cover the most important customer centric marketing strategies, it will also help to prepare the upper-level course supplement in the marketing discipline like consumer behavior, marketing management, and strategic marketing, etc. Finally, the book will reveal these customer centric concepts from a managerial/practitioner’s point of view; thus, it will also be a useful resource and reference to the marketing practitioners, especially in the area of customer care, customer relationship department, etc.

Objectives/Purpose of This Book

This book contains modern innovative contributions on customer centric marketing strategies from both an academic point of view as well as practical/application perspective. Hence, it will serve as a comprehensive guide and reference to both academics and practitioners, since it will broaden their understanding of the role of these different cutting edge customer centric strategies as conditional tools for organizational success.

The book contains 26 chapters critically engaging the reader with mainstream customer centric concepts under 7 different sections.

The overall structure of the book has been designed to achieve the overall objectives of the book, outlined below. The first section, titled “Evolutionary Preconditions and Philosophical Underpinnings of Customer Centric Strategies,” contain chapters discussing the basic understanding and evolution of concepts in the field of the customer centric marketing strategies. Consecutively, the next section sheds light on customer knowledge management as a basis or DNA of customer centric strategies. The chapters under this section provide underpinning concepts and tactical applications through different conceptual and empirical studies. In the current era of digitalization, due to the recent advancement of e-business, e-commerce, and innovation management, the book contains an innovative section (4) on e-relationships and innovative relationship building, portraying these customer centric concepts from the perspective of the electronic/online environment. Four sections (2, 3, 5, and 6) are about the specific customer centric marketing concepts/strategies of relationship marketing. The respective chapters under the sections explain and synthesize the various conceptual/theoretical frameworks, their critical success factors, and their influence on financial and marketing performance illustrated by case studies. In line with one of the key objectives of the book, the last section (7) provides a bridge towards practical implication/application of the customer centric strategies. Consequently, the chapters under this section comprehensively provide suggestions as to the concrete activities an organization should embark to most effectively and efficiently implement these concepts to reap maximum benefit from them. Basically, this concluding section represents a nexus between academia and practice.

Section 1 begins with a chapter (1) by Gianpaolo Basile, which is a conceptual chapter that focuses on the customer centric concepts from a structuralist point of view. This chapter is expected to provide a deep introductory conceptual background to the readers in terms of the evolutionary preconditions and philosophical thoughts that underlie the customer centric concepts. The aim of this chapter is to present a conceptual framework that can be useful to both practitioners and scholars in studying social relations.
and interactions between company/brand and consumer, and how such dynamics can affect—and be affected by—the reference context. This approach, based on the Structuration and the Viable Systems theories, presents indications useful to researchers and practitioners alike. The next two chapters (2 and 3, respectively, by Marija Čutura and Eleni Tzoulia) are rich conceptual chapters revealing consumer ethnocentrism issues when developing customer centric strategies as well as legal aspects to be considered before putting the customer centric strategies into action, especially in the European Union. More precisely, the analysis in chapter 2 is focused on comparability issues as a basic starting point for generalization of findings and marketing implication improvements. The purpose of the analysis is to derive the most important guidelines for comprehensive consumer centric strategies based on the studies of consumer ethnocentrism. The purpose of chapter 3 is to point to the limits set by legality pertaining to Consumer-Centric Marketing when applied within the European Union. The chapter examines two forms of Consumer-Centric Marketing, i.e. the Cause-Related and the Relationship Marketing. It explains European legislation on the protection of personal data and all current developments in Unfair Competition law in Europe, and it presents the tactics that should be avoided by companies, when implementing the above marketing methods, so as to prevent a possible ban on their advertising. The last chapter of this section (4) by Valter Afonso Vieira is an empirical study that conveys how marketing, especially customer orientation through innovation, can enhance organizational success and performance. This chapter broadens the vision with an extensive empirical study on customer centricity/orientation and usefully complements the preliminary knowledge from the earlier chapters.

Section 2 begins with an interesting conceptual chapter on CKM (5) by A. F. Wazir Ahmad and Mohammad Muzahid Akbar that delineates different CKM models and frameworks to provide a deeper conceptual understanding. In fact, this chapter attempts to provide a detailed review of literature to understand the origin and nature of CKM, its major theoretical tenets, and well-known CKM models to underscore the main factors an organization should consider when working on CKM. The synthesis of key CKM models has resulted in valuable insights to assist and inform any empirical study in this field. This chapter may serve as a comprehensive reference for future researchers. The next chapter (6) by Mohammad Fateh Ali Khan Panni is an integrated conceptual work on CKM (a newly initiated customer centric concept) in terms of marketing performance providing a specific research framework in this grey area. Implicitly, this chapter suggests a distinct approach to assess the variables of CKM in terms of marketing performance. Based on thoroughly researched secondary data, this conceptual chapter suggests a framework integrating the so far incoherent frameworks as proposed by previous authors. Emanating from this eclectic and chronological literature review, the chapter also proposes further missing links that need to be included in the proposed integrated framework. Future researchers are encouraged to validate the resulting holistic framework. The last chapter of this section (7) by Valerio Veglio is an empirical work addressing the data mining applications of customer centric concepts like CRM along with CKM. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the strong relation between data mining and customer relationship management in order to forecast the success of customer-centric marketing strategies. The concluding part of this chapter shows the results of an empirical study related to the identification of the main marketing and financial activities that could be leading customers into a credit-risk state. This study draws the attention of the readers to a logistic regression model and to the criteria based on the loss function.

Section 3 begins with an overriding strategic chapter (8) regarding CRM (a specific customer centric strategy) by Myria Ioannou. The chapter contributes to the academic debate regarding CRM relating to
this concept as an elusive one, as well as offering a much needed blueprint for the operationalization of this concept in different contexts. The chapter also reveals critical success factors that will ultimately help organizations to successfully implement this concept to attain the organizational success. In more detail, the chapter discusses the conditions that are conducive to relationship building, highlights the different forms that customer relationships may assume as well as their distinct developmental paths, and offers a number of recommendations to enhance relational efforts. The second chapter of the section (9) by Pinelopi Athanasopoulou provides a specific conceptual framework of relational marketing perspective building on the fundamental understanding of the concept derived from the earlier chapter. This chapter aims to analyze the concept of Relational Quality (RQ) and its antecedents and consequences in the area of services, account for its development and evolution over the last 2 decades, identify the developmental trends in the literature, and offer directions for future research. The third chapter of the section (10) by Myria Ioannou and Simona Mihai-Yiannaki represents another conceptual study that proposes a conceptual framework on Bank-SMEs relationship in light of the relational marketing concept. The chapter provides a specific conceptual framework of relational marketing perspective building on the fundamental understanding of the concept derived from the earlier chapters. This chapter synthesizes extant interdisciplinary literature by putting together a combination of relationship management theories as well as banking, economics, and finance theories, and blends this with findings from an ethnographic research platform to discuss the critical variables in the development of Bank-SME relationships. In addition, the chapter considers the effect of the recent economic crisis on the Bank-SME relationship. Moreover, it highlights that the new developments in the technological environment, i.e. social media, can be used to strengthen the Bank-SME relationship’s success and is especially pertinent in such times of financial duress as it can enhance the communication mode of the dyad. After this overview of major conceptual chapters, the fifth and sixth chapters of the section reflect the applied methodology of this book. The fifth chapter of this section (11) by S. M. Riad Shams accentuates various Relationship Marketing (RM) perspectives of grown organizations, with a focus on Stakeholder Causal Scope (SCS) to realize how RM has been facilitating organizational growth. Nineteen RM indicators and four broad growth strategies are evolving from a multi-case study of five grown sports organizations, where the organizations have been utilizing these RM indicators through market offerings (products and services). The last chapter of the section (12) by same author, S. M. Riad Shams, demonstrates the Relationship Marketing (RM) practices of five grown sports organizations, with the aim of realizing how the organizations have been utilizing various RM indicators in order to position their image in the target markets. In fact, this chapter is a sequel of the immediate prior chapter. Based on various existing and emergent Stakeholder Causal Scope (SCS) and relevant RM indicators, the organizations differentiate their corporate profile or market offerings in a way that conveys a central idea relating to their stakeholder relationship value and relevant market positioning. Twelve RM indicators and five market positioning dimensions and subsequent existing and emerging differentiation variables are described in the chapter for the organizations to better design and position their market offerings in the target markets.

Section 4 begins with a chapter (13) by Alessia D’ Andrea, Fernando Ferri, and Patrizia Grifoni that discusses a fundamental idea regarding the impact of social networks on the marketing process through the discussion of various methods and methodologies in this context. The chapter provides a marketing framework to analyze the use of virtual communities on marketing processes. The framework involves and describes in detail: actors (companies and companies), goals, marketing strategies, and process. Moreover, in the chapter, the framework is applied to e-Bay in order to understand how the functionalities provided by this virtual community allow companies and consumers to achieve their marketing
goals. The second chapter of the section (14) by Marion Tenge discusses in detail a conceptual framework on social network platforms with a focus on service quality in the airport industry that builds on basic knowledge obtained from the first chapter of the section. Summarizing, the chapter provides an overview of the convergence of social and technological networks. Touching on the “need-satisfier” approach of economist Max Neef, and contributions of self-determination theory, the motivational pull of SSP (Social Software Platforms), is analyzed, and success factors for harnessing their relationship marketing potential are deduced. Finally, the chapter summarizes opportunities and challenges for airport organizations when engaging with passengers on SSP. The third chapter of the section (15) by Loredana Di Pietro and Eleonora Pantano continuously deepens the knowledge on this new phenomenon by showing the impact of social networks as innovative tools for CRM (customer centric concept) through focusing on a case study of Calabrian clients-producers relationships via Facebook. In particular, the case study reflects a Calabrian scenario featuring small-size and family-run firms, which use traditional forms of marketing tools. Due to the ease and fast access to Web-technology-based platforms, these firms would be better capable of operating on a global scale, by better understanding market trends and adapting their strategies faster. Hence, the case study of Calabrian industries represents an interesting case study for analyzing to what extent these technologies can become a new marketing mix element for improving a firm’s profitability, for both SMEs and larger firms. The last chapter (16) by Elsa Serpico, Barbara Acquilani, Alessandro Ruggieri, and Cecilia Silvestri focuses on a genuine organizational performance perspective by explaining online networking tools and Web 2.0 for better managing CRM and customer centric concepts. The chapter also delineates a comparative discussion between online and offline customer satisfaction measurements. Thus, the aim of this chapter is: (a) to review customer satisfaction studies in both offline and online environment, (b) to analyze tools and methods already used to measure it, and (c) to propose a new, comprehensive, and complete theoretical framework that helps evaluate e-customer satisfaction. The last point represents a prerequisite to reach a better and exhaustive understanding of e-customer satisfaction and the joint effects of its different antecedents. Finally, the chapter clearly suggests how to design and shape a website in order to generate an even higher overall online customer satisfaction.

The first chapter of Section 5 (17) by Ioanna Papasolomou is a conceptual chapter on cause-related marketing that contains comparative discussions on the various different cause related marketing frameworks in order to elicit critical success factors. The last chapter of the section (18) by Peter Jones, Daphne Comfort, and David Hillier focuses on a very specialized area of cause-related marketing (following the basic/fundamental knowledge from the earlier chapter) in terms of sustainability from the perspective of major UK food retailers. The chapter comprises an outline of the characteristics of sustainability, a discussion of the relationships between marketing and sustainability, and a brief description of the structure of food retailing within the UK. Furthermore, the chapter draws its empirical information from the sustainability-related documentary material on the top ten UK’s food retailers’ corporate websites, and an observational survey conducted in these retailers’ stores in the town of Cheltenham in the UK.

The first chapter of Section 6 (19) by Milanka Slavova and Neva Yalman discusses the only very recently established concept of behavioral branding through the analysis of various secondary sources. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to contribute to a conceptual discussion on the major issues of behavioral branding. In doing so, it summarizes the existing models so far developed in various conceptual and empirical studies, and presents the two-way branding strategy construct. It further reviews the critical success factors of behavioral branding such as strategy, internal communication, leadership, and the organizational culture. Finally, the influence of behavioral branding strategy on the marketing and
financial performance of the company is discussed. After the discussion of these more generic issues, the second chapter of the section (20) by Sandra Maria Correia Loureiro suggests conceptual models of behavioral branding, i.e. focusing on consumer brand relationship. The purpose of this chapter is to show an overview of the seminal research from customer relationship management to consumer-brand relationship and propose a theoretical model of the consumer-brand relationship process. In this vein, the chapter begins with the conceptualization of customer relationship management. The last chapter of the section (21) by Gianluigi Guido, Alessandro M. Peluso, M. Irene Prete, Cesare Amatulli, Giovanni Pino, and Cinzia Pace presents the results of an extensive empirical study on some currently burning issues of behavioral branding, i.e. identity, image, or personality of place marketing. The chapter is expected to broaden the understanding of this particular customer centric concept through experimental work and an in-depth study that will garnish the initial underpinnings of the concepts derived from the earlier chapters. This chapter reports the results of a survey articulated into two complementary studies, performed in four districts located in Italy. These studies assess the opportunity to design destination-branding strategies on the basis of customers’ perceptions, providing a framework to quantitatively determine the identity of a local district and its perceived image. The main contribution of the research consists in presenting a methodology for the evaluation of the consistency between the identity, the image, and the perceived personality of a district, which are considered very important aspects of behavioural branding.

The first chapter of Section 7 (22) by Pier M. Massa comprehensively discusses the pragmatic realities of brand-led transformation for the successful implementation of the customer centric concepts from the managerial/practitioners’ point of view. In fact, this chapter melds a practitioner’s view with current theory and offers pragmatic and proven approaches to translating these strategies into initiatives that drive customer and company benefits with successful enterprise-wide outcomes. The second chapter of the section (23) by Niksa Alfirevic, Nikola Draskovic, and Jurica Pavicic further illuminates the practical implications of the customer centric strategies through illustrating a European case study on how a company has implemented a model of customer centric strategy. In particular, this chapter presents a model of customer centric strategy implementation based on best practices developed by Vetropack, one of the leading companies in the European glass packaging industry. Although the model developed and case presented is based on some industry specific features, the overall approach could be used as a benchmark for different industries and companies, especially those who are active in business-to-business markets. As an outcome, combining the theoretical framework and best practice findings, the chapter proposes an innovative approach to customer-centric strategy, which unifies internal and external organizational learning. The next chapter of this section (24) by Bernd Hallier is a case study revealing a practical/tactical application of customer centric strategy in facing a challenge and tackling the crisis of the German meat market. This very pragmatic case portrays a real life situation where customer centric strategies have been implemented to overcome a crisis. The chapter can be considered a catalyst for strategic lessons to be learned by the managers, practitioners and politicians as well as a classroom case. The last two chapters of the section (25 and 26) are dedicated to the practical application of these strategies from the perspective of organizational performance; chapter 25 by Samuel Rabino, Dana Rafiee, Steve Onufrey, and Howard Moskowitz discusses the practical implication of these strategies on the marketing performance against the corporate background of a sport club; chapter 26 by Santiago Forgas-Coll, Ramon Palau-Saumell, and Javier Sánchez-García shows the impact of customer centric strategies on the marketing performance based on an empirical study. In particular, the purpose of chapter 25 is to examine factors that affect a season ticket holder’s decision to renew membership by focusing
on Florida’s Jacksonville Jaguars football franchise. Initially, the authors examine mainstream literature focused on customer satisfaction and relationships and, consecutively, analyze socio-motivational factors affecting spectator attendance. A conjoint experimental methodology is employed analyzing data collected online from 2721 respondents. The results offer frontline sales and marketing units of sports teams a methodology as to how to better communicate and incentivize current season ticket holders to continuously purchase season tickets. The purpose of chapter 26 is to analyze the loyalty of airline users in both online and offline environments, and the influence exercised by the virtual environment on overall loyalty to an airline company through a very extensive empirical study with a total of 1710 personal interviews with users of different airline companies. In the analytical part, structural equations models were used, in particular the technique of confirmatory factor analysis. The results reveal the most important predictors of loyalty between passengers and airline companies both in online and overall context.

The Value of the Book

In the marketing era, customer orientation developed to customer centricity, which should be the cornerstone of every marketing activity. In this wave, within the last few years, different groundbreaking customer centric concepts like Relationship Marketing (RM) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) have achieved widespread recognition in both the scientific and executive community. Apart from these, only recently, some new dynamic concepts evolved in the discipline like Customer Knowledge Management (CKM), Behavioral Branding, and Cause-Related Marketing. From the existing body of knowledge, it could be found that a good number of studies have been conducted (both conceptual and empirical), especially on RM and CRM. In light of these conceptual developments, the editors of the book perceived the need to synthesize the various concepts based on its common denominator of customer centricity and to enhance the academia-practice interface. On the basis of this synthesis, a conceptualized model has been developed that is furnished after the discussion.

It seemed further required to highlight innovative insights on these concepts, and, consequently, a respective section has been designed in the book. In this modern digital era, the discipline needs to be advanced by revealing knowledge and information on e-relationship and innovative relationship building. In this regard, the book has included a detailed section on this that contains some highly innovative chapters. As new emerging concepts, the book synthesizes some significant conceptual chapters and a few, partially, very extensive empirical studies on CKM, Cause Related Marketing, and Behavioral Branding. It may be noted that in this innovative stream of knowledge, there is a lack of significant empirical studies. In this respect, these comprehensive conceptual studies are expected to support future researchers to validate them and, hence, advance the discipline by conducting rigorous empirical studies based on the concepts, models, and frameworks proposed by the chapters of this book. In addition, the book has included a section on practical implications of these customer centric concepts to provide a nexus between academia and practice. Furthermore, the book has included an introductory section that reveals philosophical underpinnings and foundations of these customer centric strategies that will broaden the horizon and basic understanding of these customer centric marketing strategies from dynamic perspectives. Figure 1 is the synthetic model that has been developed from the structure of the book in terms of the flow of the sections and their chapters.
Rationale of the model. In general, the model shows a flow of diagram that highlights how the core customer centricity starts and how it has been operationalized through the academia-practice interface to achieve organizational performance by means of sustainable relationship building in traditional as well as in the online environment.

Thus, the book provides:

- Detailed conceptual and philosophical underpinnings of customer centric strategies.
- An extensive review of conceptual and empirical studies of these cutting-edge concepts. These clarified their role, interrelationship, characteristics, and critical success factors to the readers and future researchers of the discipline.
- An exploration of knowledge on e-relationship and innovative relationship building.
- A detailed review of different frameworks, models, and constructs of recently emerged areas like CKM, Cause Related Marketing, and Behavioral Branding as a hypothetical starting point of further extensive empirical study in the field.
- Understanding of the influence of these concepts on organizational performance.
- A detailed analysis of some established customer centric concepts like RM and CRM from some new and innovative contexts and perspectives.
- A better guide to operationalization for practitioners.
- Overall, a synthesis of these groundbreaking customer centric concepts that will serve as a holistic reference to academics and practitioners.

Hans Ruediger Kaufmann  
*University of Nicosia, Cyprus & International Business School of the University of Vilnius, Lithuania*

Mohammad Fateh Ali Khan Panni  
*City University, Bangladesh*