Foreword

Consumers are the most important people for any organization. They are the resources upon which the success of the businesses and other organizations depend. One of the primary goals of any retail marketing strategy should be to identify and meet the needs of the consumer. Considering consumer importance at all stages of the marketing process helps an organization to ensure greater consumer satisfaction and increase its long-term goal of repeat business.

Consumer satisfaction is at the heart of marketing. Studies over the year estimate that it costs five to ten times as much to attract new consumers as it does to keep an existing one. The relationship between the consumer and the organization is critical.

Developing good consumer relationships continues to be one of the major concerns for businesses around the world. The role and importance of providing consumer service continues to be emphasized by organizations of all sizes. Academic and practitioners alike continue to look for ways to measure and create better consumer service.

In the *Handbook of Research on Retailer-Consumer Relationship Development*, Fabio Musso and Elena Druica have edited the quintessential collection of research articles that address many of the major issues related to the study and practice of relationship between retailers and their consumers. They have brought together academics from all over the world to address the key issues for the development of successful relationships between retailers and their consumers for their different perspectives.

Section one of the book presents six chapters discussing how consumer behavior and buying preferences influence their relationships with retailers. Consumers’ perceptions of value, self-congruity, well-being, and loyalty are a sample of some of the topics discussed in the initial section. The second section of the book is a series of works that examine the role of store formats and retail services on the consumer-retailer relationship. This section examines a wide variety of variables inside and outside (i.e., trees in a retail shopping area) of stores that influence the consumer experience.

The third section addresses a specific topic within a retail store that influences consumer behavior – its atmosphere. This chapter looks at attempts by retailers to enhance the consumers’ experiences in the store by appealing to their senses, training employees to be unbiased when working with consumers, and showing consumers the retailers’ commitment to social responsibility.

The final section of the text presents seven chapters that show how retailers can use technology to innovate in ways that improve their relationships with consumers. The integration of online sales and promotion within the traditional retail environment is the topic of five of the chapters.

Overall, this collection of writings from authors representing 15 different countries presents a diverse range of views on an important topic. It also shows the common need that exists for retailers to find ways to develop good relationships with their consumers to keep them happy and loyal.
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