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The Impact of Relationship Marketing on Developing Competitive Advantage in Retail Sector – polish case

Abstract

Marketing in Retail has become a field of interest for managers acting on retail market quite recently. The paper introduces the relationship marketing as a new marketing concept for retail entireties. It ought to be mentioned that in world literature, the application of relation marketing has only been started to be discussed recently because according to the views of representatives of the Nordic School (E. Gummesson, 2002) it was not adjusted for the so-called marketing of packaged goods. The goal of the paper is to show the actions of retail chains in the sphere of relationship marketing aimed at their customers. The purpose of this paper is to 1) identify and recognise the types of relations that occur between retail chains and their customers 2) identify key drivers of relationship among retail chains and customers and 3) to show the impact of these key drivers on customer behavior . In the paper author presents results of empirical research that took place in Poland.

Keywords: Relationship marketing, retail sector, retail chains

1. Introduction

The authors of marketing case studies have been discussing the issue of application of marketing orientation of operation. Relationship marketing has emerged over the years and focuses on building long-term relationships with customers and other parties (Chumpitaz et al , 2007). As Grönroos (1993) observed that (...) establishing a relationship, for example with a customer, can be divided into two parts: to attract the customer and to build the relationship with that customer so that the economic goals of that relationship are achieved. According to Berry, we define relationship marketing as "marketing activities, that attract, maintain and enhance customer relationships". (Berry, 1983).

Retailers functioning in competitive environment should continuously develop their strategic approach to marketing activities to secure their effectiveness of activity and development. Development of marketing concept constantly shows new spheres of interest of this discipline. In economic practice, we can observe the evolution of the fundamental marketing paradigm (the so-called cognitive one), that changes its interests from the problems of accomplishment of transaction conclusion and strengthening its efficiency through stressing the long-term targets realised in the context of winning an advantageous competitive position, up to actions that create permanent relations with various groups of entities that cooperate with the enterprise (Gummesson, 2002).

In literature we can distinguish three fundamental concepts of marketing in the enterprise: transaction marketing, strategic (competitive) marketing, marketing of relations (partnership). The last concept of marketing has been winning more and more proponents, both in scientific environment and in economic practice. It is particularly useful in conditions of growing changeability of economic surroundings because it forces establishment of relations between market entities. It ought to allow them to win a competitive advantage. The objective of relationship marketing is to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction through collaboration of the parties involved (Payne et al. , 1995, Sullivan, Adcock 2002).

Relationship marketing tactics play a predominant role because of the increased importance consumers pay attention to relational properties of their interactions with retailers (Cosby, Evans, Cowles 1990, Dorsch, Swanson, Kelly 1998)

2. Relationship marketing in Retail

Retailers have possibility to build enduring relationship with consumers because it's quite easy to detect consumer purchase patterns and apply this knowledge in a cost- efficient way. (Sweeney, Soultar and Johnson, 1999). Rapid development of activity of retail trade chains all over the world stimulates discussion on the subject of directions and range of their marketing activity (those changes are analysed by such authors as T. Hines, M. Bruce, J. Raynolds, J. Fernie, D. Gilbert, F. Summer and many others. The policy of formation of relations with customers (the case of customers it is about creation of a group of loyal customers with repeated purchase) is an important element of this activity. Growing demands of customers and growing competition on market provide the reasons for the necessity of change in the approach to comprehensive strategy of retail chains (Gilbert, Sumner).

Establishment of relationship with target customers is becoming a very important element of marketing strategies of retail entities. Therefore major marketing challenges include finding the ways to gain customers and maintain the present ones. The basic concept of their activity was based on using marketing instruments (Sullivan M., Adcock D. 2001). However their importance was remarkably changing simultaneously with the flow of time because of changes that were taking place in consumers' behaviour (Davies B., Ward Ph.1998).

The use of the approach of relationship marketing is different in different sectors. Caviello and Brodie (1998), based on Gronross (1991) propose continuum, based on their empirical research. As we can see support of RM in showed sectors differs. We can also state,

that in comparison to finance services, industrial good and industrial services, in retail is smaller.

Figure 1   Continuum of suport for the „cornestone" RM proposition
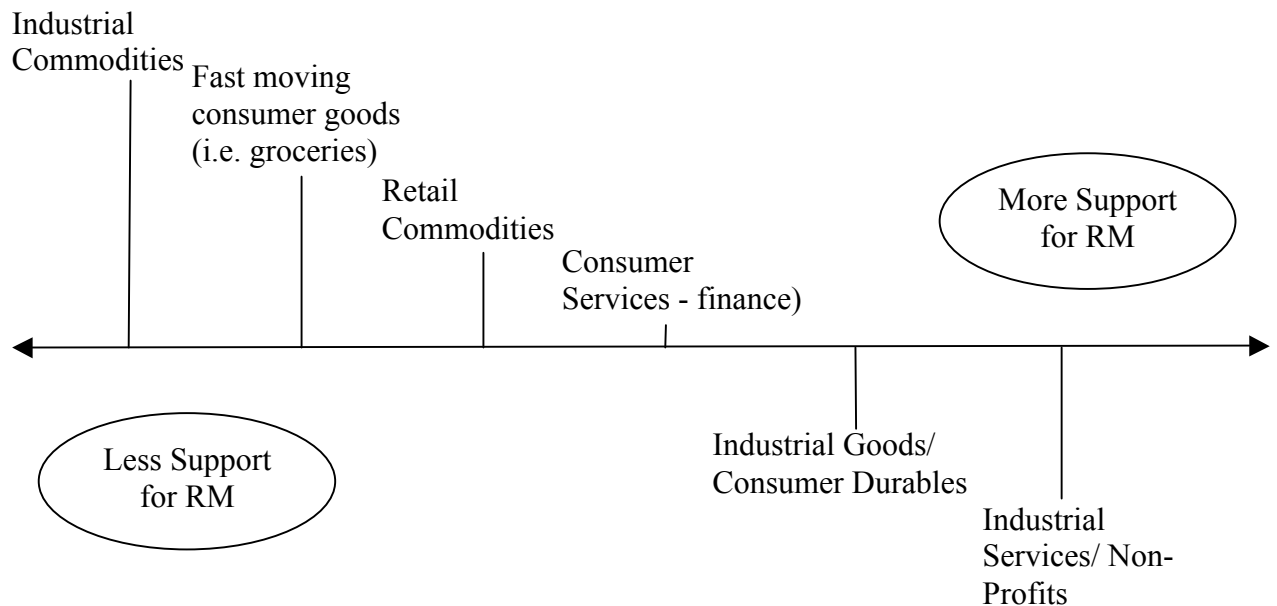
It's worth to note, that the high competitive nature of polish retail sector also require the firms continually estimate strategy regarding relationships to win the competitive advantage (Kanyon and Vakola, 2001). For example the loyalty strategies of many retailers (Tesco, Auchan, Carrefour) are case of using one-to-one relationship marketing strategies. These strategies base on maximize of value of customers, creating marketing knowlage about individual customers, building own brands and using CRM. (Maklan S., Knox.S., Peppard J., 2007, p.6). We can sum up that customer satisfaction and a positive attitude in general is an important driver in a firm success.(Cooil B., Keiningham T.L., Hsu M, 2007)

The focus of relationship marketing is often considered to be customer retention because retention is cheaper than acquisition (Fornell, Wernerfelt 1987, Reichheld 1996).

3. *Polish retail sector, origin, characteristics*

In the second half of the 90s a very rapid development in the sphere of trade was observed in Poland. Because of the lack of trade defence instruments associated with domestic market protection, almost all the largest trade concerns from Europe quickly joined them. As a result there was a sudden growth in shops with foreign capital, and special

dynamics of increase in the number of large-selling area chain stores was observed. The table below presents the ranking of the world's biggest retailers, among which European retailers hold top positions and all of them function in Poland.

Table 1 Top global retailers in the world by retail sales functioning in Poland

Name of company	Country of origin	Retail sales in 2009 in $ mln	Compound annual growth rate CAGR[*] 2004-2009(%)
Carrefour	France	119 887	3.4
Metro Group	Germany	90 850	3.0
Tesco	U.K.	90 435	10.9
Schwarz	Germany	77 221	9.8
Aldi	Germany	67 709	6.3

Source: „Leaving home. Global Powers of Retailing 2011"

The largest retail trade companies and chains, within which hypermarkets function (large selling area chain shops), and that operate in Poland include: 1. Metro Group, that manages such chains as Real, Praktiker, Media Markt, Macro C&C. 2. Carrefour Poland, that manages Carrefour, Champion and Globi chains, is another player on Polish market. 3.Auchan, a group of international range, that is the owner of over 360 hypermarkets and 635 supermarkets is an important chain on Polish market. 4. Tesco Poland is another chain operating in Poland. Similarly to its competitors, it operates on international markets and manages Tesco and Savia chain. 5. Kaufland. Almost all of them have also in their strategic profil another format of retail (supermarkets and discounts).

Strong foreign competition between large selling area chains influenced constraint of the role of traditional trade on the one hand, and on the other it brought fast development of New Channels of Distribution (NCD). We understand under the term NCD hypermarkets, supermarkets and discounts.

Table 2   Number of NCD (hipermarkets, supermarkets, discounts) in Poland in the years 2006 - 2010

year / NCD	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2015(Estim.)
Hipermarkets	222	245	267	282	290	330
Supermarkets	1816	2186	2303	2424	2600	3700
Discounts	1383	1528	1756	1948	2140	3000

Source: own study based on RolandBerger Strategy Consultant Report, Retailer og the Year 2010

It comes out of the author's observations that the fastest developing channels of distribution include: Hypermarket channel and discount shop channel. Development of domestic trade chains, that is particularly visible in supermarket segment is a positive phenomenon in the sphere of Polish trade. Every successive year of functioning in the chain brings new investments of Polish operators, owing to which the dynamics of their changes is very high.

The changes in using of NCD in Poland are presented in fig. 2

Figure 2 Share of sale of different retail formats In Poland In the years 2006 – 2010
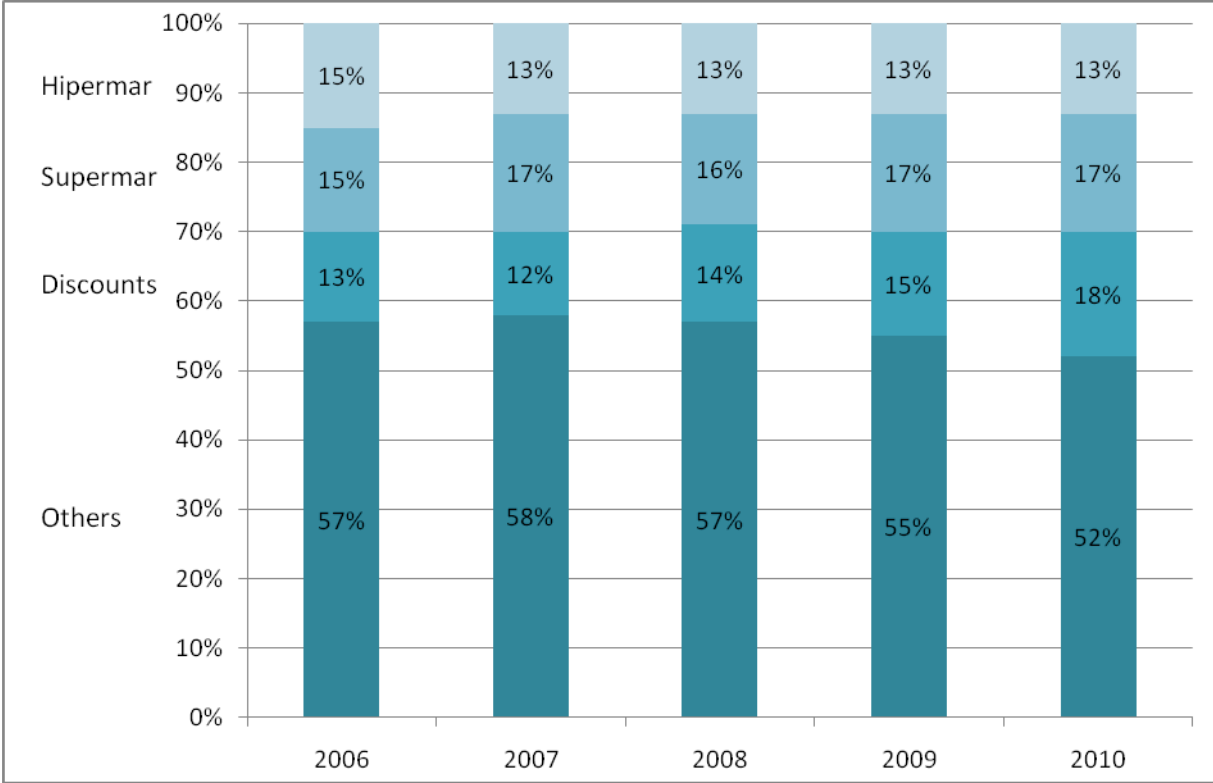
Source: RolandBerger Strategy Consultant Report, Retailer of the Year 2010

In the EU countries (also in Poland), retailing is becoming more concentrated. This trend can be observed in food retailing in particular, and is more characteristic of Northern European countries than Mediterranean ones. In Italy, companies employing more than 20 people account for a mere 13%.

Figure 3 Shares in the retail market of 10 Top retailers in selected European countries

The low share of 30% (of Top retailers) in Poland presents the scale of potential for further retail concentration. It's worth to note that concentration processes in Poland will be limited by the dispersed residential structure of the population and Polish shopping habits.

European expansion of large selling area chains significantly influenced the speed and direction of changes taking place in Polish trade, that were also determined by demographic structure of Poland. At present around thirty eight million Poles live in almost 54,5 thousand locations, among which only 600 are cities of population larger than 5 thousand people. They make the areas in which New Channels of Distributions (NCD) are developing. In places in which population is smaller than 5 thousand inhabitants, traditional trade is still predominant, and about 25% of all grocery shops are located in the country.

As it has been mentioned above, large selling area chain stores started their activity in Poland in the second half of the 90's. In the initial stage of expansion large cities were their major target. At present smaller cities also become very attractive for expansion.

To sum up the present discussion, we can state that foreign large selling area chain stores make a very important economic potential of Poland, and moreover, conditions of their functioning are more and more competitive. It is worth adding that activities of foreign trade chains remarkably increase competition in retail trade sector, which in practice results in pro-customer actions undertaken by entities in this sector. This actions are strongly connected with the concept of relationship marketing.

4. Creation of marketing utilities for target market as the ground of relationship marketing

The needs of target market are the primary element related to the creation of specific instruments for influencing the market. The target market for large selling area organisations are the customers – households that have defined budgets for doing shopping. And just in relation to this recognition, it is easy to observe the assortment division based on economic criteria into products for the customers the price – amount and goods for wealthier customers.

The creation of a set of values – utilities for the customer is the consequence of the customer's needs recognition. Such an attitude is typical of behavioural marketing actions of the *stimulus-response* type. This approach is related to behavioural paradigm, according to which the point is to shape behaviours based on repeated purchase. The picture below presents the process of formation of the marketing instrument that influences the target market of the retail entities. Dependently on marketing composition, the number of instruments that are created will be different (in the earliest sources the composition of marketing mix in trade was interpreted through the prism of the following elements: product/assortment, price/assortment, services, and facilities) (Steward – How 1995). Maximising the lifetime value of a customer is a fundamental goal of relationship marketing (Christopher, Payne, Ballantyne , 2002)

Figure 4   **The process of formation of a marketing instrument**
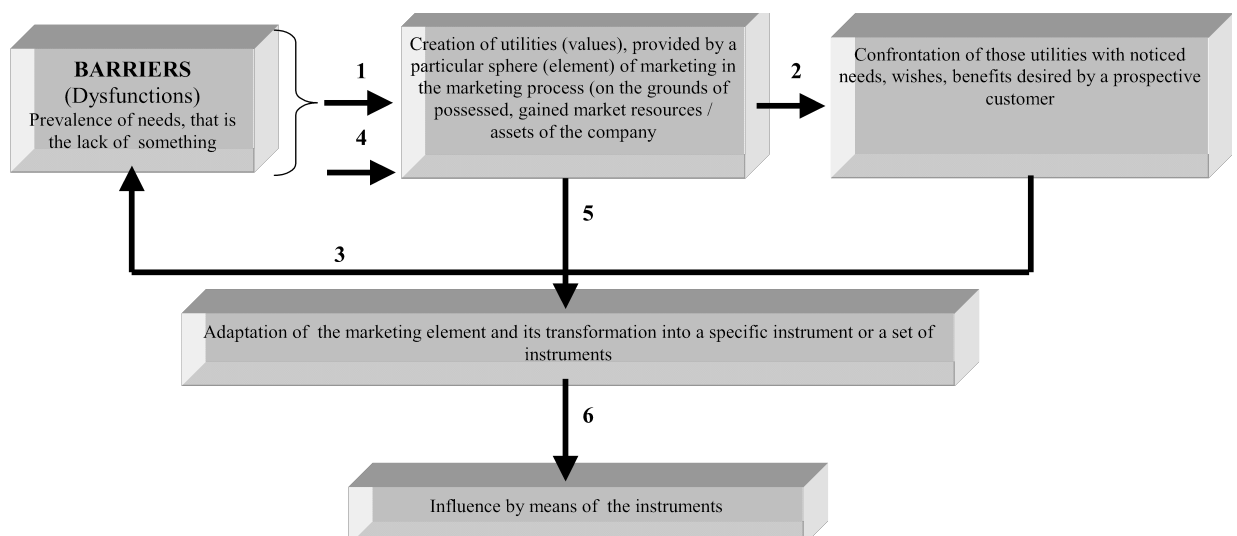
Source : Own study

We can see in the fig. 4, that the values are included in a particular marketing offer and after that there is the confrontation of already created utilities with observed needs, and finally, with the degree of their satisfaction. If the needs are not satisfied or are only partially

satisfied we can observe the return to the beginning of the process and creation of modified utilities of the particular sphere of marketing. As a result the adaptation of the marketing instrument and its transformation into a specific instrument of market influence takes place.

Another approach assumes that actually, the retailer offers the product for sale, that is, everything – good and bad – which is received in exchange. It is a combination of material and non-material qualities, including functional, social and psychological advantages or benefits. According to this approach, the retailer offers a complex product for sale. It comprises such elements as (Davies, Lin, 1995):

1. Location and image:

    a) virtual or physical location;

    b) image of the retailer and his positioning.

2. Interior surroundings and the product:

    a) the atmosphere of the shop, interior surroundings;

    b) range of offered goods

3. Stimuli coming from the shop:

    a) image of relative prices and values;

    b) efficiency of promotion;

    c) standard of service during the sale and the quality of after-sale service.

4. Relationship with customers and shaping the customer's loyalty

    a) the power of firm relationship with the customers.

Analysing the presented approach, it can be stated that it is consistent with the previous approaches, that is, it includes all the previous marketing elements, but their sequence is different (for example the price and value not the margin, promotion as an element related to stimuli coming from the shop and not as an autonomous instrument, location and image). Additionally, there appears a component related to the shaping of the relationship with the customers. Relationships are given in the central place in the development of marketing models and concepts to be used in service context (Gronroos, 2007). According to the author of the study, the location has a special role in planning the marketing strategies of retail entities and therefore it should be examined as a separate instrument of influencing the target market and developing relationships with customers (Davies B., Ward Ph. 2002).

5. Methodology

The major purpose of the survey of the customers of trading outposts was to define the factors that shape relations of customers with sellers of consumer goods and services and to assess the significance of particular determinants for the establishment of permanent relations between the consumer and the trading outpost. It's to observe, that each organisation should be goal-seeking, learning entities where investments and management policies create uniqe recources such as brand, consumer relationship and distribution partnerships (S. Maklan, S. Knox, J. Peppard, 2007). In research the author tried to identify how the retail chains develop their relationships with customers.

5.1 The Sample

Analysing FMCG market a survey of respondents who were customers of trading outposts was performed. It was assumed that each of the respondents used services of a trading outposts and because of this, they establish relations of various degree of intensity with them.

The survey included 915 respondents (they fully filled in the questionnaire), out of which 37% were men and 63% were women. Quoted studies (Ac Nielsen 2008) show that 43% of Poles do the shopping in modern self-service shops. Typical customer of polish retail chains it's a women 25-49 years of age living in city over 100.000 population. Women constitute majority of customers of hyper- and supermarkets. Those are women with secondary or university education, and income in their household higher than 3500 PLN. People with primary education, retired people and those who run one-person household do the shopping in hyper and supermarkets much less often. Such information is giving by research firms like GFK Polonia that research polish retail market (year reports from 2005,2006,2007).It is also the reason why the sample was accepted. Among the respondents, the majority were people of up to 25 years of age, a quarter of the respondents represented the age bracket between 26 to 35 years of age. The least numerous group was made up of people over 35 years of age. Such a distribution can be explained by the fact that direct survey was performed via mail. Considering the respondents' education we can state that almost half of the respondents were people with secondary education (47%), 26% with higher vocational education and 20% with higher MA education. Only 7% of respondents were people of lower than secondary education. Such characterisation is also very typical polish customers of retail chains (mainly big international chains)

Majority of respondents came from cities and 13% of studied group lived in the country. It ought to be added that over a third of respondents are inhabitants of cities with population over 100 000. Considering the respondents' income we can state that majority of them describe their material situation as average or good. Only 8% of the studied group consider their material situation as very good and 4% define it as bad or very bad.

5.2 Research assumptions

Designing the research tool, initially we adopted the assumptions resulting from studies of literature, according to which the relation between an individual consumer and supplier of goods and services is determined and, at the same time, characterised by 4 major groups of factors or dimensions of relations:

1. involvement of the customer in contacts with company – it includes actions undertaken by the customer for the purpose of establishment of relations with the company (hereinafter referred to as customer's activity – CA)

2. involvement of an enterprise in contacts with the customer – it includes actions undertaken by the enterprise for the purpose of establishment of relations with the consumer (enterprise activity – EA);

3. satisfaction of the consumer with products / actions of the company (S),

4. consumer's trust in company (T).

In the first case, an attempt to identify those features of an offer / activities of the enterprise that determine whether the consumers consider a particular trading outpost as „friendly" and would like to be its customers in the next years was made. Therefore, it was about identification of those instruments that are included in the range of company activity and the implementation of which directly shapes long-term friendly relations of the trading outpost with customers. The list of company activities / features of the offer included 24 factors. It was assumed that each of the respondents used services of some trading outpost and because of this they establish relations of various degree of intensity with them. Popularity of particular trading outposts is presented in table 3.

Tabel 3.   Popularity of particular trading outposts among the respondents

Retail forms	Name of trading outpost	Percentage of respondents
Discount	Biedronka	47,0
Hypermarket	Tesco	45,0
Convenience stors	District shops	41,2
Hypermarket	Carrefoure	36,5

Retail forms	Name of trading outpost	Percentage of respondents
Hypermarket	Real	33,3
Discount	Lidl	31,6
Hypermarket	Auchan	27,2
Convienience store	Żabka	24,2
Traditionl commerce	Market place	23,1
Hypermarket	Kaufland	21,0
Supermarket	„Społem" chain	12,2
Supermarket	PHS Lewiatan	11,5
Supermarket	ABC chain	7,8
Supermarket	Leclerc chain	5,2
Supermarket	Delikatesy Centrum	4,6
Supermarket	Polomarket chain	4,2
Supermarket	Groszek chain	4,1
Supermarket	Piotr i Paweł	2,6
Supermarket	34 chain	1,6
-	Others	10,6

Source: Own study

The largest group of respondents is made up of customers of Biedronka discount shop (47%). The group of most frequently visited shops includes Tesco (45% of indications) and district shops. All foreign trading chains are also popular, and they obtained over 25% indications here.

Then, the respondents were asked which trading institution they would choose if they had to limit themselves to the use of services of only one institution, and services of which they would abandon in the first place if it was necessary. It was assumed that the answers to the questions should allow to establish which trading outposts the respondents felt related to the most and the least. Most people who declared that they would do the shopping in the particular institution if they had to choose only one were found among the customers of Delikatesy Centrum, Biedronka, Auchan and Real chain. On the other hand, most respondents declaring the will to abandon services of the trading chain in the first place were found among the customers of Tesco, Biedronka, Real and Żabka chain. Complete results presenting responses to the questions above are included in table 4.

Table 4.   Trading outposts of strong and weak relations with customers

Name of trading outpost	Percentage of customers declaring their will of further use of the trading outpost (in %)	Percentage of customers declaring their will to abandon the services of the trading outpost (in%)
Biedronka	**10,5**	**9,0**
Tesco	0,1	**10,1**
District shops	0,3	4,9
Carrefoure	**7,9**	6,3
Real	**8,7**	**7,3**
Lidl	4,9	5,7
Auchan	**9,5**	3,4

Name of trading outpost	Percentage of customers declaring their will of further use of the trading outpost (in %)	Percentage of customers declaring their will to abandon the services of the trading outpost (in%)
Żabka	-	**8,7**
Market place	-	1,3
Kaufland	4,1	3,3
„Społem" chain	0,8	2,0
PHS Lewiatan	2,0	2,3
ABC chain	1,3	2,1
Leclerc chain	0,8	0,7
Delikatesy Centrum	**27,2**	0,7
Polomarket chain	0,8	0,4
Groszek chain	0,3	1,0
Piotr i Paweł	0,3	-
34 chain	0,1	-

Source: Own study

Data collected during the survey became the subject of further analyses. Firstly, an attempt to identify factors that shape relations between the trading outpost and customer was made. Secondly, it was intended to distinguish groups of variables of similar importance for respondents among the range of features that were manifestations of the outpost activity that shaped long-term, friendly relations with customer. For realisation of both of these purposes, factor analyses of appropriate sets of data were performed with application of main components' method. The table below shows the groups of factors and corresponding tasks applied in factor analysis.

Table 5.   **Groups of factors and corresponding tasks applied in factor analysis**

Group of factors	Task	Symbol of question used in descriptions
Factor associated with trust and satisfaction with services of the outpost	X shop does not meet my expectations	S1
	I am not satisfied with cooperation with X shop	S2
	Offer of the X shop corresponds to my needs	S3
	Behaviour of X shop employees does not meet my expectations	S4
	Promises made by X shop (for example in leaflets) are not reliable	T1
	It happened that X shop disappointed me	T2
	I trust X shop	T3
	X shop employee is only interested in the sale of a product and not in my good	T4
	X shop does not present interest in its customers	EA4
Factor associated with involvement (activity) of the outpost	The shop presents individual approach to me	EA1
	The shop designs offers specially for me	EA2
	I know that if I had a problem with purchase of any product, employees of X shop would help me	EA3

	I never ask the employees of X shop about new offers	CA2
Factor associated with lack of involvement (activity) of customer towards the outpost	In case of any doubts related to X shop offer, I will not contact the shop	CA3
	I am not interested in participation in loyalty programs conducted by the shop	CA4
Factor associated with involvement of customer towards institution	I look for information (on the Internet, in leaflets, etc.) about promotional offers of X shop	CA1

Source: Own study

First step in research was correlation analysis. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 6   Factor loadings Matrix in Model of relationships between customer and positivly evaluated trade outpost

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	
EA1	0,139	**0,880**	0,094	0,024	
EA2	-0,018	**0,856**	0,070	0,100	
EA3	**0,405**	**0,534**	0,038	0,091	
EA4	**0,508**	0,182	0,306	-0,168	
CA1	0,010	0,137	-0,026	**0,849**	
CA2	-0,015	0,182	**0,651**	-0,138	
CA3	0,060	0,153	**0,725**	-0,049	
CA4	0,118	-0,041	**0,611**	**0,476**	
S1	**0,769**	0,048	0,076	0,091	
S2	**0,742**	0,034	0,047	-0,065	
S3	**0,554**	0,197	-0,270	0,196	
S4	**0,609**	-0,021	0,190	-0,154	
T1	**0,665**	0,068	0,054	-0,024	
T2	**0,638**	0,093	-0,015	0,018	
T3	**0,636**	0,352	-0,085	0,228	
T4	**0,555**	0,201	0,315	0,067	
Explained Variation	3,842	2,124	1,659	1,147	Σ
Share	24,01%	13,28%	10,37%	7,17%	54,82%

Source: Own study

The analysis greatly confirms the adopted assumptions because it made it possible to distinguish four groups of factors. The first one can be identified with satisfaction and trust of the customer, the second one with activity of the outpost and the third and fourth ones with activity of the customer.

Questions AF4 are the only exception here („X shop does not present interest in its customers") as their adherence to the factor of satisfaction and trust is difficult to interpret although it can show the policy of many trading outpost that lies in the struggle for a new customer and „forgetting" the old one (meaning the one that is satisfied with cooperation with the institution). Such an attitude is associated with pushing the policy oriented on increase in the share in market. Division into two factors of customer activity can be explained by the fact that the fourth component can be identified with activity of the customer in the sphere of looking for information about the institution and the third one with the lack of this involvement or a kind of inactivity towards the trading outpost.

A similar analysis was performed with reference to trading outpost the services of which the customers would abandon first. The table presents the results of study.

Table 7 **Factor loadings Matrix in Model of relationships between customer and nagatively evaluated trade outpost**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	
EA1	0,062	**0,864**	0,032	0,050	
EA2	-0,018	**0,814**	0,103	0,213	
EA3	0,223	**0,704**	-0,068	0,081	
EA4	**0,505**	0,086	0,315	-0,153	
CA1	-0,138	0,149	0,238	**0,602**	
CA2	0,045	0,085	**0,751**	-0,056	
CA3	0,116	0,019	**0,711**	-0,070	
CA4	0,221	-0,028	**0,678**	0,297	
S1	**0,619**	0,134	0,305	0,359	
S2	**0,684**	0,169	0,246	0,355	
S3	0,240	0,234	-0,069	**0,703**	
S4	**0,621**	0,049	0,107	-0,178	
T1	**0,701**	-0,022	0,001	0,071	
T2	**0,709**	0,047	-0,019	0,154	
T3	0,366	0,375	-0,094	**0,514**	
T4	**0,568**	0,203	0,125	-0,111	
Explained Variation	3,136	2,230	1,895	1,622	Σ
Share	19,60%	13,94%	11,85%	10,14%	55,52%

Source: Own study

Again, the analysis confirmed the adopted assumptions because it allowed to distinguish four groups of factors the structure of which is similar to the one assumed in the theoretical model. The first one can be identified with satisfaction and trust of the customer and the second one with activity of the outpost. Similarly to preferred institutions, the only exception here is question EA4 („X shop

does not present interest with its customers") that the respondents associated with the first factor, that is the satisfaction and trust and not with involvement of the outpost (factor 2).

The third one brings together the questions related to customer's involvement, but (similarly to preferred outposts) only those of a negative inclination. Therefore, this factor can again be associated with the lack of involvement of the customer in establishment of relations with the shop.

Finally, interpretation of the fourth component is more difficult in the case of rejected shops because apart from the statement on looking for information about the trading outpost (CA1), also statements S3 („Offer of the X shop corresponds to my needs") and T3 („I trust X shop") were included here. Despite the fact that an outpost is negatively assessed by the customer it may happen that the offer of the shop corresponds to their needs for example in the sphere of range of goods, location, etc.

The next step in the study was analysis of four factors (involvement of the customer in contacts with company, involvement of an enterprise in contacts with the customer, satisfaction, trust) on the propensity of customers to develop relationships with outpost. For this purpose assessed the activity of outpost in sphere of crating relations with customers, activity of customers in that sphere and customer satisfaction and trust related to outpost. Average values of this assets are presented in the table.

Table 8   Average values of strength of the relationship and it's determinants

	EA	CA	S	T	Siła relacji
Most preferred outpost	16,217	15,446	20,812	18,760	9,754
The least preffered outpost	13,257	13,742	15,573	15,265	6,111

Source: Own study

Strength of the relationships between customers and most preferred outpost ant it's determinants were higher estimated than the strengths and it's determinants between least preferred outpost.

In order to explore the broader research the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated and their statistical significance was verified.(Tab.9)

Table 9   Spearman's rank correlation between strengh of the relationship and it's determinants for most and least preffered outpost

	Determinants of relationship	EA	CA	S	T
Most preferred outpost	r Spearmana	0,410	0,197	0,488	0,514
	Significance	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000
The least preffered outpost	r Spearmana	0,441	0,227	0,450	0,360
	Significance	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000

Source: Own study

We can state that all four factors significantly influence the relationships between customers and mast and least preferred outposts.

Last stage of the study was analysing the answers of customers in which they assessed in scale from 1 to 5 what makes the trade outpost „friendly" to customer and that the customer „wants" to be it's customer. The list of 24 sentences was used. The table below presents the sentences and their average values.

Tab. 18.   List of 24 features of „friendly" outpost and their average notes

Symbol	Feature of „friendly" outpost	Average note
W1	Wide range of products	4,385
W2	Well-known and seller	3,605
W3	Good location	4,390
W4	Identification of customers by sellers	3,189
W5	The possibility to purchese on „short" credit	2,017
W6	Free parking space	3,991
W7	Free trolleys	3,657
W8	Frequent promotions	4,108
W9	Good location of products in shop	4,266
W10	Expert advice	4,155
W11	Respecting by sellers the customers wishes	3,946
W12	Advising the customers taking into consideration their interests	4,132
W13	Attractive prices	4,561
W14	Loyality cards	3,371
W15	Easy Access to credit cards (e.g. Tesco, Real, Skarbonka Auchan, etc.)	3,113
W16	„0" percent installment	3,369
W17	Numerous attractions in proximity of outpost (restaurants, cafes, cinemas, post office etc.)	3,470
W18	Possibility to leave the child on the playground under the supervision	3,199
W19	Possibility to leave the bicycle in the special place	3,418
W20	Large selection of favorite brands	4,304
W21	Possibility of free travel to outpost (free buses lines)	3,625
W22	Frequent tastings	3,235
W23	Possibility of taking part in competitions	3,045
W24	Cheap fuel in the proximity of outpost	3,195

5.3 Findings

On the grounds of results of both versions of factor analysis and performed correlation analysis we can formulate the following conclusions:

- satisfaction and trust of customers were included in one factor which can prove joint treatment of those issues by customers of trading outposts

- it seems that activity of customers of trading outposts can be less important and it occurs marginally in relation to interaction between the aforementioned factors. Probably relatively higher activity of a part of involved customers who are more interested in contacts with the enterprise is a factor that favours strengthening the relations with trading outposts, however, it is not a necessary condition for such a relation to actually appear.

The next stage of research was the attempt to reduce the large number of variables that describe factors shaping long-term relations of trading outposts with the customer that come in the range of activity of the enterprise. Similarly, here the analysis of main components was also applied (Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests were the following: KMO rate of adequacy of sample selection = 0.916, Bartlett's globosity test = 9086.075, relevance $p= 0.000$ which to a higher degree allows to reject the hypothesis of unit correlation matrix)   The following factors that shape relations were distinguished tab.10

Table 10   Factors shaping relations between customers and retailers

Factor	Characteristics
Factor related to assortment of goods of a given shopping place	What is possible to buy? Which brands (own brands), also to the way they are offered (promotions, layout of goods). Additionally, the respondents included location in this group of variables. In the case of retail trade it is the key success factor.
Factor related to conveniences associated with transport of purchased goods	For example free trolleys, free large car park. Distinguishing this factor may prove that customers of shopping places become more and more "lazy", they do not want to look for unoccupied parking spaces or look for trolleys or have "coins" for the purpose of using them. Therefore a lot of shopping places make it possible for customers to use tokens instead of money when they want to use the trolley or they even let the customer use the trolleys for free.
Factor associated with some non-standard special services	For example leaving children under care and the possibility of getting to the place by bike (safe way of matching recreation with shopping). Thereby possible barriers / obstacles for doing the shopping (neither a child nor a bike are a problem) are eliminated.
Factor related to wide range of additional services	Characteristic mainly for large shops – such as for example loyalty programmes, instalments, product tasting and contests in shops, free transport, cheap fuel, etc.
Factor related to wide range of additional services	Factor related to formation of individual interpersonal bonds in shops, with friendly relationships between the customer and

	seller, that is, in other words, with the need of individual attitude towards the customer. However, as results of the study show, the respondents pay less attention to this element.

Source: Own study

We can state that for customers, attractiveness of products offered by shopping places is the most important. Not only quality, low price, wide assortment of goods is important for them but also the way they are sold – the layout, professional aid in product selection, respecting customers' requests. All these actions are undertaken by large selling area chain stores.

Apart from issues related to goods, location of a shopping place, and also (in next positions) factors related to transport of purchased good are also of a great importance. Personal bonds between the shopping place and the customer seem to be less significant.

The aforementioned factors can prove that customers do their shopping more and more frequently in self-service shops in which personal bonds with the seller are not so important. Therefore, we can assume that modern shopping places (supermarkets, hypermarkets and discount shops) apply efficient strategies for influencing their customers and establish their affiliation through marketing instruments focused around assortment offer, location and efficient promotion and price policy. We can also state that customer satisfaction is a factor that decidedly influences the assessment of relationship with a shopping place (Pilarczyk B., Sławińska M., Mruk H. 2001). Places that are preferred (as compared with the rejected ones) give more satisfaction to customers with the value provided. On the grounds of research we can state that the elements of value provided to customers influence the feeling of satisfaction from relationships with a shopping place the most, and they are included in the value of product actually offered to the customer.

What might be interesting is the fact that even the highest level of satisfaction does not guarantee a strong affiliation of the customer to a particular shopping place, although undoubtedly it increases the chances of its establishment. Satisfaction is a necessary condition, yet not sufficient, for creation of strong relationship between customers and shopping places. In the table below are presented actions connected which shaping relationships with customers by selected retail entities. Relationship marketing tactics are used by hypermarkets and super markets (also of polish origin).

Table 11. Relationships tactics used by selected retailers in Poland

Element of the offer	Auchan	Carrefour	Real	Tesco	Leviatan	Polo-market	Piotr i Paweł
Lokation In shopping centers	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
Credit cards	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
Merchandising, that actract shopping spce (e.g remodeling)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Loyality cards (collecting of poins)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Petrol stations	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Diversifications of assortment (non food products)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Own brands	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Financial services (e.g. cash Lorans, 0% installment)	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
Mobile (cellular thelephony)	-	X	-	-			
High tech customers servis (e.g. self cash)	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
Możliwość doładowania karty	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
Free buses lines	X	X	X	X	-	-	-

Source: Own study

Observing strategies of product development in retail trade chains we can state that large selling area chain stores implement strategies of assortment innovation and its wide diversification. However, it should be indicated that this diversification is associated with products / services that are totally different from the initial offer. Introduction of products that are not directly related to activity of large-selling-area chain stores is another issue mentioned in the paper. Construction of the chain of petrol stations located next to hypermarket chains can be an example here. Shopping chains grew to be the sixth power of petrol market. Petrol stations next to large shops compete in the sphere of prices with traditional petrol stations. In the sphere of assortment innovations, attention should be paid to introduction of financial services by large selling area chain stores.

In Great Britain Tesco Personal Finance (TPF) offer over twenty financial products: from saving accounts and credit cards to car insurance or policies for pets.

Own brands are an important element of retailers' strategy and for a lot of them they are of a key importance (Chen, Ching – Liang, 2009). Therefore, we can observe a pursuit to unify them in the whole chain that operates in various countries and made of various shop formats. As it was stated in the report on tendencies in development of own brands worked out by M+M Planet Retail, in their actions, retailers are motivated by the will to increase their

purchasing power and achieving the synergy effect. Own brands are identical in various countries, however products are adapted to local tastes and, most often, produced in each of the various countries. We can assume that hypermarkets in Europe, as well as in Poland are in their phase of maturity (intensification of fight for share in the market which in practice is often manifested by competing with the use of price instruments is a characteristic feature just of this phase of market development). It ought to be added that contemporary customers become more and more demanding and they want to buy products of average or high quality for cheap prices.

We can state that own brands are to generate higher margins for the chain (by around 10%) when compared to other brands. They are associated by customers with a particular chain very well and they are undoubtedly becoming an important element of their loyalty establishment. It should also be added that mass television advertising campaigns more and more often serve their promotion.

Another issue is establishment of customer loyalty through associating them with a particular large-selling-area chain store through credit card. In practice, introduction of credit cards into chain requires setting up a cooperation with financing institutions, that is with banks. A tested method of persuading customers to intensify purchase is making it possible for them to do a credit purchase. For a long time shopping chains have been mediating in the access of customers to easy and fast loan.

Hypermarket credit cards are the development of this type of credit products. They make it possible for customers to get indebted within an available credit limit and most often they are a result of cooperation between chain stores and banks. These cards are often associated with implementation of loyalty programmes, for example collecting points for purchase made, or giving discounts to their owners. On the grounds of observations of hypermarket marketing practices, we can state that majority of large selling area chain stores offer international debit cards. Chains cooperate with banks such as Lukas, Cetelem or HSBC. Chains that do not have international cards still offer private cards to their customers, however majority of them also make preparations to introduce cards with Visa or MasterCard logo. Thanks to international card customers gain general acceptability, can use the card anywhere, also abroad, while travelling or resting. As it is shown by research, moving of trade chains from private to international cards, reflects evolution of their customers.

6. Implications and directions for future research

The result of this study support for thesis regarding the directional linkages among 4 dimensions of relations between retail entities and their customers.

From academic point of view, the research examines some relevant questions in field of knowledge considered. Among them it is important to point out the role of involvement of the customer in contacts with the company, involvement of an enterprise in contacts with the customer – it includes actions undertaken by the enterprise for the purpose of establishment of relations with the consumer, satisfaction of the consumer with products/actions of the company, consumer's trust in company.

From managerial perspective, presented study brings several contributions to marketing professionals. Findings of this study indicate that long-term relationship implies in treating patients in satisfactory. Investment in increasing consumer's trust and commitment will strengthen relationship between customers and retail entireties.

We should remember that this research have some limitations, which can be opportunities for future research. Key limitation of this study is choice of retail sector in which probably the changes take place very rapidly. Secondly, it was only considered limited number of involvement of the customers, involvement of enterprise, satisfaction and trust . Other determinants (cognitive or affective) or moderating variables could influence this judgment of retail entities. It is believe that future focus on role of different determinants will promote better understanding on relationship marketing in retail.

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