

Introduction

Two powerful forces are transforming society and the economy, making customer value even more central to the survival and growth of businesses.

The first is sustainability. Far from being a passing trend, it represents a profound paradigm shift: companies are now required to merge the pursuit of profit with the pursuit of the common good (Savitz and Weber, 2006). Long-term value creation depends on value creation for society as a whole—today and for future generations. This means finding a dynamic balance across three key dimensions: delivering sound economic performance (profit), protecting and enhancing environmental resources (planet), and fostering social progress (people). Achieving this balance demands continuous innovation—of processes, products, supply and distribution chains, business models, and even reporting systems.

The second is the digital revolution. The massive growth of data on preferences, behaviors, and choices is dramatically increasing stakeholder empowerment—especially for consumers—pushing firms toward greater exchange, participation, and collaboration. The proliferation of interconnected devices, combined with consumers' willingness to share information freely, has created an unprecedented wealth of data. When harnessed through machine learning and artificial intelligence, this information becomes a powerful driver of insight and innovation. At the same time, digital transformation is redrawing competitive landscapes, creating entirely new industries, removing geographical barriers, and fostering convergence across business ecosystems. Through open collaborative platforms, it enables firms to place the authentic well-being of people, society, and the environment at the center of strategy.

The evolutionary framework sketched above underscores the increasing centrality of marketing competences. It is through these competences that firms can capture signals of market change, embed stakeholders into corporate processes while fostering continuous innovation, and conceive a value proposition that is balanced not only in economic and financial terms but also from an environmental and social sustainability perspective. While on one hand the profound transformations underway reaffirm the centrality of multiple managerial dimensions, on the other they highlight fascinating new domains for Marketing to explore and cultivate: from interacting with increasingly interconnected and proactive customers, to harnessing the potential of the data-driven economy; from building memorable experiences to managing them through omnichannel logics; from creating value via collaborative innovation to multiplying it through new platforms and the dynamics of the “sharing society.”

From this perspective, after analyzing the contribution of marketing to the creation of sustainable value (Chapter 1), this volume explores the themes of customer value (Chapter 2), customer centricity (Chapter 3), and customer relationships (Chapter 4), with the aim of highlighting the main analytical, strategic, and operational issues. Finally, the last chapter addresses how digitalization is reshaping the way companies analyze the market, identify, reach, and engage with their target audiences in today's dynamic marketplace. How digital channels, technologies, and platforms are relevant to an approach to marketing based on an analysis of the market, a strategy that culminates in a specific positioning based on that analysis, and the tactics used to execute that strategy will be examined. Each chapter of the book—which represents an evolution of our previous work *Customer-Based View* — concludes with an appendix offering practical applications of the concepts and tools presented.

This volume is the outcome of a research journey articulated through numerous stages, to the accomplishment of which several colleagues—co-authors of the works that have enabled the progressive refinement of the ideas herein presented—have contributed in a decisive manner. To all of them we wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude, not only for the rigor and analytical depth of their conceptualizations, but also for the friendship they have unfailingly offered us throughout these years.

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