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Gulakova Olga Vyacheslavovna

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CUSTOMER ORIENTATION CONCEPT OF COMPANY
IN THE RUSSIAN MARKET

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Candidate of Sciences in Economics, Associate Professor
Rebiazina Vera Alexandrovna

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THESIS RESEARCH

Statement and substantiation of the relevance of the research problem. Customer orientation, as one of the main concepts of modern marketing, started actively developing in the 1990s. At the same time, customer orientation emerged as part of the marketing concept; the main provisions of which were formulated back in the 1950s, since the focus of the marketing concept is the customer and their needs. In the 1990s, customer orientation became one of the central themes of marketing research. Despite a significant number of researches devoted to the theoretical rethinking of the concept of customer orientation and its assessment, there is still no unified definition of customer orientation. Many authors consider customer orientation as an element of the company's market orientation, while others identify customer orientation as an independent variable in the marketing activities of a company.

As one of the key concepts of modern marketing, customer orientation requires a rethink in the context of emerging markets. Noticing the importance of examining existing marketing concepts and practices in the context of emerging markets, researchers emphasize the need to implement their institutional environment to adapt both theory and empirical tools used in practice¹. In the studies by Russian authors, there are conclusions, based on empirical data, on the discrepancy in the understanding of concepts and marketing practices, which is partly due to the specifics of the Russian market². For the last three decades the developments remain the subject of close scrutiny, and their specific features call into question the applicability of models from developed markets to emerging markets. In addition, there is no single approach of assessing customer orientation and approaches that take into account the specifics of the market situation. Existing works devoted to the study of customer orientation in developing markets, including the Russian one, use the approaches for developed for markets³. At the same time, the main part of the work is focused on studying the impact of customer orientation on the company's performance, while there are relatively few studies devoted to assessing and measuring the customer orientation of Russian companies.

¹ Goldman, S. P. K. Strategic orientations and digital marketing tactics in cross-border e-commerce: Comparing developed and emerging markets / S. P. K. Goldman, H. van Herk, T. Verhagen, J. W. Weltevreden // *International Small Business Journal*. – 2021. – Vol. 39. – N 4. – P. 350–371.

² Latyshova, L. S. Customer orientation: research, strategies, technologies / L. S. Latyshova, I. V. Lipsits, O. K. Oyner, S. V. Karpova, I. A. Firsova, S. P. Azarova, E. K. Panteleeva, A. G. Rozhkov, K. L. Rozhkov. – M. : Infra-M, 2020. – 241 p.

³ Yuldasheva, O. U. Customer oriented business modeling / O. U. Yuldasheva, I. N. Trefilova, V. G. Shubaeva. – St. Petersburg : Saint Petersburg State University of Economics, 2019. – 102 p.

In the face of growing competition, the significantly increasing market power of consumers and changing their needs, as well as other competitive challenges, companies are looking for new opportunities to create and maintain competitive advantages. At the stage of saturation in developed markets, such changes in the external environment are forcing companies to expand their planning horizons and be more customer-oriented. Since the beginning of the transition to a market economy, Russia has experienced several crises that stimulated the development of marketing practices, in particular customer orientation. Changes in consumer behavior associated with the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, put companies in a new environment for interacting with consumers⁴. In an increasingly competitive environment, companies in the Russian market are more often forced to change their business strategies and apply new approaches to attract and retain customers. Given the instability of the economic situation in the Russian market, a special challenge for the implementation of customer orientation is the fact that companies have to look for new approaches to be competitive. Many companies are faced with the need to implement a customer-oriented approach, but it is important to understand what mechanisms should be implemented to increase the level of customer orientation.

Due to the fragmented nature of the study of customer orientation in the Russian market, empirical studies often show contradictory results of its assessment in companies. Significant differences between developed and emerging markets and the presence of specific features of customer orientation in the Russian market, call into question the possibility of using the approaches created for developed markets in their original form, without adaptation for emerging markets. Some studies describe the presence of specific features of customer orientation in the Russian market, one of which is its declared nature, when the company only reenacts some external manifestations of customer orientation. Therefore, the tools for assessing customer orientation, created for developed markets, do not allow for identifying the declared customer orientation and assessing the customer orientation of Russian companies without adaptation.

The degree of elaboration of the problem. Customer orientation is one of the main areas of marketing research, which is being developed by both foreign researchers, such as J.J. Lamben, D. Narver, S. Slater, A. Koli, B. Jaworski, R. Deshpande, J. Farley, F. Webster, and V. Kumar, and by Russian authors S.P. Kazakov, S.P. Kushch, L.S. Latyshova, I.V. Lipsits, O.K. Oyner, N.I. Popov, V.A. Rebyazina, A.G. Rozhkov, M.M. Smirnova, O.A. Tretyak, O.U. Yuldasheva, and O. I. Shirshov.

⁴ Berezka, S. M. Changes in consumer behaviour in the BRICS countries during the COVID-19 pandemic: The role of trust and anxiety / S. Berezka, V. Rebiyazina, S. Muravskaya // BRICS Journal of Economics. – 2021. – Vol. 2. – P. 53–73.

Customer orientation is studied at various levels: one of the first highlighted is customer orientation at the personnel level in the works of R. Sachs, B. Weitz, S. Kelly, D. Donavan, T. Brown, J. Moven, E. Mann, A.A. Kostanyan, M.Yu. Sheresheva, and K.V. Klepneva; customer orientation at the company level, in the works of D. Narver, S. Slater, A. Kohli, and B. Yavorski; at the level of the value chain in the works of W. Elg, A. Rindflesh, S. Murman, A. Francescucci, S. Henneberg, and P. Node.

The first concepts of customer orientation were more general in nature and were applied to consumer and industrial markets, industries and companies, among them the work of such researchers as R. Ruckert, R. Hayens, D. Narver, S. Slater, A. Kohli, B. Jaworski, R. Deshpande, and B. Shapiro. With the emergence of research on the distinctive features of developing markets the customer orientation of companies operating in these markets has emerged as an independent area of analysis and is described in the works of I. Akimova, G. Seilov, L. Xing, A. Tse, F. Yim, V. Hong, S. Kh. Zhuang, Lee, P. Ellis, N. Lado, L. Duke, and D. Alvarez Bassi.

In the work of recent years, authors are focusing on a deeper study of individual concepts of customer orientation in the context of various strategies, markets, and business processes^{5, 6}. In a separate block can be attributed works devoted to the systematization of the knowledge gained about customer orientation on the basis of a meta-analysis that summarizes the results of several studies, or works that analyze the evolution of research in assessing the level of market orientation of companies. There are also studies where conceptual models of customer orientation have been developed. For example, in some studies, a conceptual model of a customer-oriented approach to business has been described, which includes the features of a customer-oriented company and its performance metrics. The studies of the Russian market are limited and are described by such authors as P. Golden, J. Kraigenbrink, A. Gron, M. Roersen, J. Frozen, O.V. Gulakova, S.P. Kazakov, V.M. Panin, V.A. Rebyazina, A.G. Rozhkov, and M.M. Smirnova. Most of the research in the Russian market is devoted to studying the impact of customer orientation on the business, at the same time, there are not so many studies devoted to assessing the customer orientation of Russian companies and taking into account this specificity. The results of assessing customer orientation in studies vary greatly, which reveals a problem in evaluating the level of customer orientation of companies in the Russian market.

⁵ Yuldasheva, O. U. Customer oriented business modeling / O. U. Yuldasheva, I. N. Trefilova, V. G. Shubaeva. – St. Petersburg : Saint Petersburg State University of Economics, 2019. – 102 p.

⁶ Liu, Z. How does one-sided versus two-sided customer orientation affect B2B platform's innovation: Differential effects with top management team status / Z. Liu, Y. Huang, Y. Huang, Y. A. Song, A. Kumar // Journal of Business Research. – 2022. – Vol. 141. – P. 619–632.

The goal and tasks of the study. The goal of the research is to develop a model for formation of customer orientation at the company level, taking into account the specifics of the Russian emerging market.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks were set and solved:

- to formulate the definition of customer orientation and define directions of development of the concept of customer orientation for the development of a conceptual research model;
- to identify and analyze the levels of study of the concept of customer orientation;
- to test approaches of assessing the customer orientation of companies operating on the Russian market;
- to form the typology of customer-oriented companies operating in the Russian market;
- to develop a tool for assessing the customer orientation of companies based on the specificity of customer orientation in the Russian market;
- to develop practical recommendations for customer orientation formation for companies operating on the Russian market.

Subject and object of research. The subject of the research is the concept of a company's customer orientation. The objects of the research are companies operating in the Russian emerging market.

Research methodology. In the dissertation, a model for assessing and formation of customer orientation is developed based on the results of an empirical study of the development of customer orientation in companies in the Russian market. At the empirical stage of the study, a mixed method was applied – a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The purpose of the mixed research method is to level the disadvantages and use the advantages of each type of research. In this design, the sequence of methods is especially important: first of all, it is necessary to reveal, through a quantitative study, how suitable the indicators of the existing scales are for the Russian market, then, within the framework of a qualitative study, specific features of the Russian market that are not reflected in the existing scales indicators are revealed. The main method is the qualitative one, which allows you to highlight additional indicators that evaluate the processes of customer orientation, and the auxiliary one is the quantitative, which allows to test the indicators developed for developed markets.

The goal of the quantitative study, with a sample of 322 respondents, was to test existing approaches to assessing the customer orientation of companies in the Russian emerging market. Studies have repeatedly proved the assumptions about the impossibility of using tools created for

developed markets in emerging markets without adaptation. Therefore, it was necessary to study and test the tools for assessing customer orientation, created for developed markets, for the possibility of using them to form the concept of customer orientation in the Russian market. To analyze the data of the quantitative part, frequency, factor, and cluster analysis methods were used. The statistical packages IBM SPSS 20 and IBM SPSS AMOS were used as software.

The goal of a qualitative study, with a sample of 61 respondents, was to identify the specifics of customer orientation and its processes in companies on the Russian market. As part of the qualitative stage, in-depth interviews were conducted and analyzed using the analysis-analysis method.

The author obtained the following **main findings to be defended**:

1. The stages of evolution of the concept of customer orientation are determined.
2. A conceptual model of customer orientation at the company level has been developed.
3. An integrated approach to assessing a company's customer focus has been developed based on the results of testing existing approaches to assessing customer focus in the Russian market.
4. The specifics of customer orientation of companies operating in the Russian market is revealed.
5. A model for formation of the company's customer orientation in the Russian market is developed and tested.

The scientific novelty of dissertation research is to develop an integrated approach of assessment and formation of the customer orientation of companies operating in the Russian market. The most important results with scientific novelty are formulated in the following provisions:

1. the main directions of development of the concept of customer orientation on the Russian emerging market are highlighted;
2. based on a systematic analysis of existing approaches of assessing customer orientation, a conceptual model of customer orientation has been developed, which includes process and value components;
3. highlighted the specifics of the client orientation of companies in the Russian market, which includes its declared nature;
4. a multi-factor model for evaluation and formation of customer orientation and a tool for evaluation of the customer orientation of companies in the Russian market has been developed, which allows not only to obtain a quantitative evaluation of the customer orientation of companies but also to develop recommendations for improving it.

Theoretical and practical significance. The theoretical significance of the dissertation research lies in the development of an adapted approach of assessing the customer orientation of companies in the Russian market. The results of the research can be used in the development of the theory of customer orientation and market orientation in emerging markets. The practical value lies in the development of a comprehensive tool that allows companies to assess customer orientation and identify the main problems for developing a plan to improve customer orientation. Also, the results of the study can be used within the framework of the disciplines "Relationship Marketing" and "Marketing Strategies".

Application of research results. Some results of the research were presented and approved at a number of international conferences, namely:

1. XVI April International Scientific Conference "Modernization of Economy and Society" (Moscow, 2015). Report: «Specific Features of Customer Orientation in the Russian Market»;
2. The European Marketing Academy Annual Conference 2016: Marketing in the Age of Data (Oslo, 2016). Report: «The peculiarities of the customer orientation in the Russian market: The results of empirical research»;
3. 32nd Annual IMP Conference: Change and Transformation of Markets, Networks and Relationships (Poznan, 2016). Report: «Specific Forms of Customer Orientation in the Russian B2B Market: The Results of Empirical Research»;
4. GSOM Emerging Markets Conference 2016 (St. Petersburg, 2016). Report: «What forms of customer orientation exist in the Russian B2B market?»;
5. CBIM Academic Workshop (Stockholm, 2017). Report: «How do Russian B2B firms understand and implement customer orientation?»;
6. GSOM Emerging Markets Conference 2017 (St. Petersburg, 2017). Report: «Is Customer Orientation of the Russian Companies Real or Declared?».

MAIN FINDINGS TO BE DEFENDED

1. Customer orientation evolution development

Based on the analysis of the literature, the main stages in the development of customer orientation were identified (Figure 1). At various stages of its evolution, the concept of customer orientation was considered at different levels, and at each stage, there was a shift in the focus of studying customer orientation. The first stage includes work in which customer orientation is considered as a characteristic and competence of the personnel serving clients. At this stage, there was a transition from sales orientation to customer orientation: customer orientation acted as a sales practice in the marketing concept at the seller and buyer level, which implies low “selling” pressure on the buyer and an approach focusing on the need to satisfy/solve the buyer's problem.

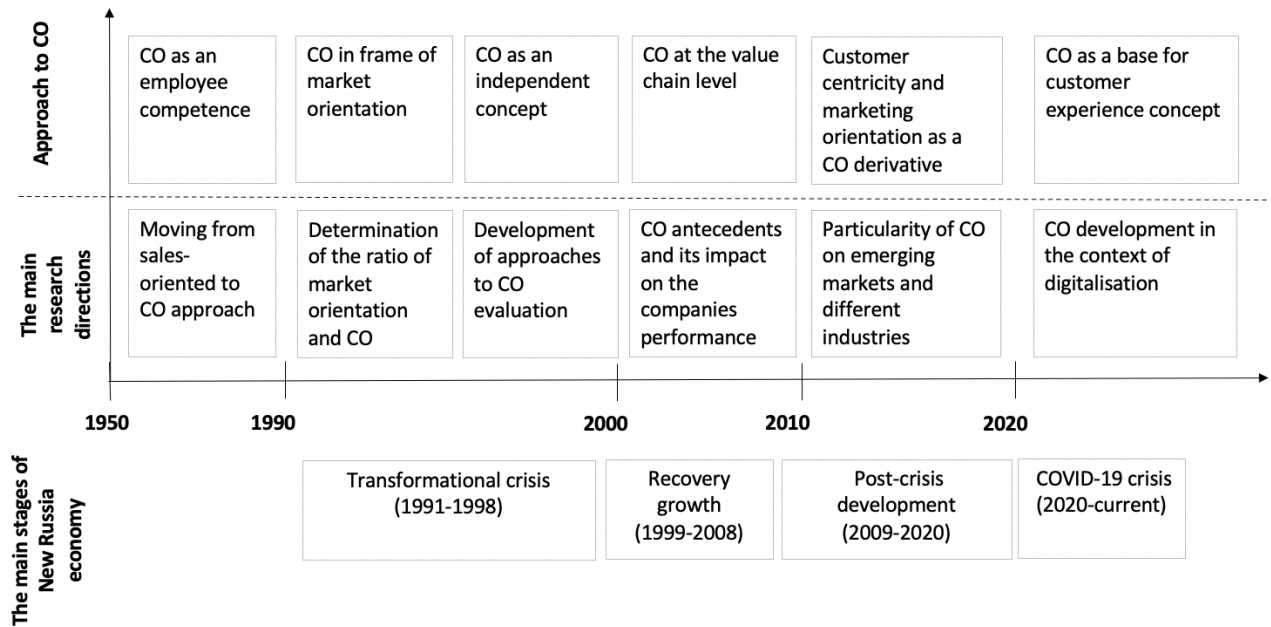


Figure 1 – The main stages of the evolution of the concept of customer orientation (CO)

Source: developed by the author.

At the second stage, the term customer orientation is already applied to describe the activities of the entire company, while it is considered both as an independent concept, and in the context of the term market orientation. There are several approaches to the relationship and interpretation of these concepts: synonymous understanding of market orientation and customer orientation, customer orientation as part of market orientation and customer orientation as an independent term. In the literature, there is no unified approach and understanding of customer orientation, therefore, in order

to develop a research methodology, it is necessary to differentiate between these concepts and clarify the term “customer orientation”.

In this period, the main research topics are devoted to the development of approaches of assessing customer orientation. As the next stage of evolution, we can distinguish the consideration of customer orientations at the level of value creation. During this period, the antecedents for customer orientation development are being actively studied, including its impact on a company's performance and the correlation with innovations. In the last decade, based on the concept of customer orientation, similar concepts have begun to develop customer centricity and the marketing orientation of a company. The interest of researchers in this period is aimed at studying the specifics of developed and emerging markets, and the research also focuses on the specifics of customer orientation in various industries and markets. The third decade of the 21st century is characterized by the active development of online technologies, universal digitalization, and changes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which leaves an imprint on the further development of the concept of customer orientation. During this period, concepts aimed at studying and interacting with the client began actively developing, for example, the concept of customer experience management. In recent years, customer orientation has been studied in the context of online channels and digitalization.

The development of the customer orientation concept at the company level coincided with large-scale changes in the Russian economy. The history of Russia's economic development largely determines the specifics of marketing development and, in particular, customer orientation on the Russian market. During the active development of various marketing concepts in Western markets, Russia followed the path of a planned economy, which is why it lags far behind Western markets. In the history of New Russia, four stages of the economy's development can be distinguished: a transformational crisis (1991–1998), recovery growth (1999 – 2008), post-crisis development (2009 – 2019), the COVID-19 crisis (2020 – until now).

2. Customer orientation conceptual model development

Based on the conducted systematic analysis, a conceptual model of customer orientation has been developed, which includes the prerequisites for the formation of customer orientation in a company and its impact on other aspects of a company's activities (Figure 2). The central part of the model is occupied by customer orientation. Based on the analysis of approaches to the study of

customer orientations, several levels of the study of this concept can be distinguished: customer orientation at the employee level, customer orientation at the company level, and customer orientation at the level of value chain creation. Customer orientation of employees and the entire company are interconnected; the existence of one without the other is the exception rather than the rule. It is important for companies to pay attention not only to the customer orientations of their employees, but also to assess their customer orientation at the level of the entire company.

The model identifies two levels: the customer orientation of the employee and the customer orientation of the company. Both levels are interrelated, as the analysis revealed that the employee, his personal qualities, skills, etc., affect the customer orientation of the entire company, and the company influences his customer orientation through motivation, improving corporate spirit.

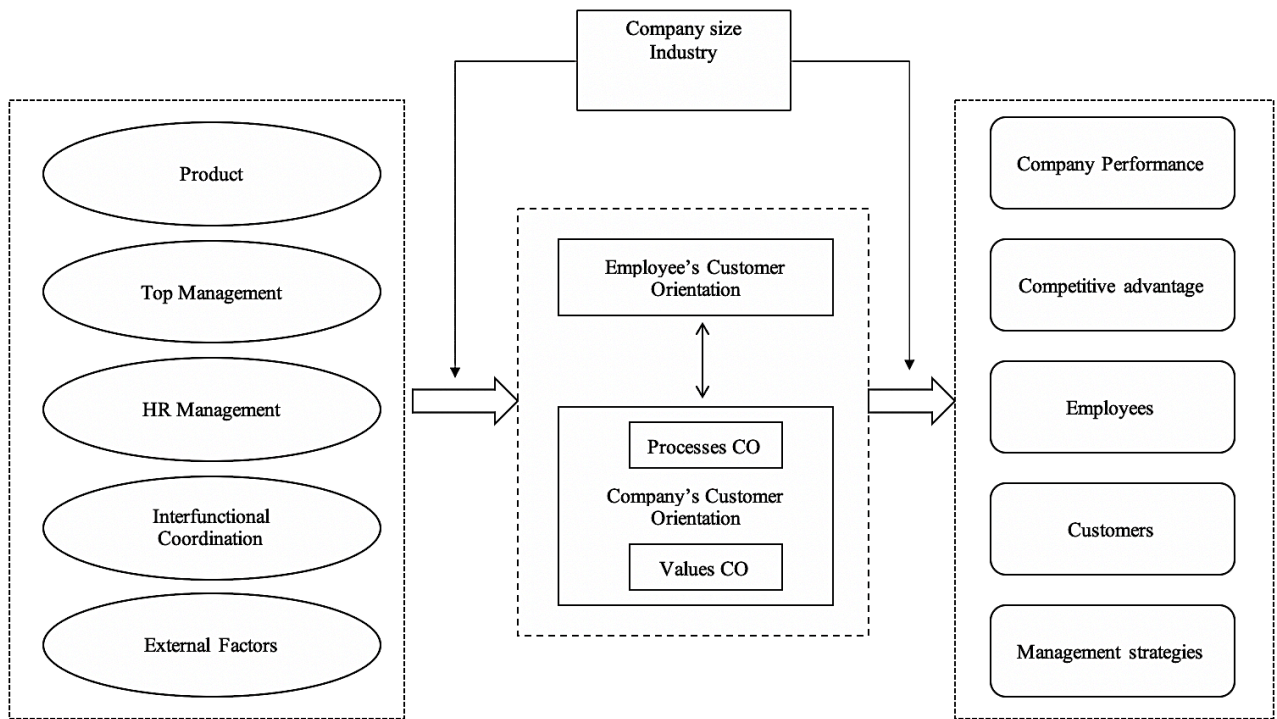


Figure 2 – Conceptual model of customer orientation

Source: developed by the author.

In some studies, there are various approaches to defining the customer orientation of a company, for example, some researchers characterize it as value, behavior, process, strategy or culture. However, most definitions of customer orientation can be divided into two approaches: process and value. Proponents of the value approach define customer orientation as a characteristic trait of a company and one which expresses its values. At the same time, R. Deshpande, J. Farley, and J. Webster, consider customer orientation as a set of beliefs that put the interests of consumers first,

not excluding the interests of the company, managers and employees, for the development of a profitable company in the long term. However, in recent works, the question of the need for an integrated approach began to be raised, since separately, the process approach and the approach to customer orientation as a value, does not give an exhaustive description of a customer-oriented company. Within the framework of this model, an integrated approach was used with the separation of process and value components.

It is the understanding of customer orientation as a multidimensional structure, that includes values and processes, that will make it possible to objectively assess customer orientation and reveal the declared customer orientation. Declared, or imitated, customer orientation is an interaction with the consumer, which is by no means aimed at identifying customer value, its reproduction, and satisfaction of the needs and requirements of the customer. The declared customer orientation only reproduces some external manifestations of customer orientation. Largely, the process component determines the actions of the company, therefore it is the analysis of the company's processes that reveals the real customer orientation. In the customer orientation model, O. A. Tretyak and A. G. Rozhkov consider the relationship between the three levels of processes, as well as interaction with customers, which fills these processes with content, and structures the dynamics and coordination of market interactions. As part of the analysis of existing concepts, this model was modified by the selected processes of a customer-oriented company, the study of which is necessary to assess customer orientation (table 1).

Table 1 – Processes of customer orientation of the company: main studies

Process	Sources
Customer information collection	Lamben, 2007; Oyner, Latyshova, 2010; Tretyak, Rozhkov, 2012; Yuldasheva, Shirshova, 2013; Gulakova, Rebiazina, Smirnova, 2015; Kohli, Jaworski, 1990; Narver, Slater, 1990; Ruekert, 1992; Deshpande, Farley, Webster, 1993; Narver, Slater, MacLachlan, 2004; Roersen, Kraaijenbrink, Groen, 2013; American Marketing Association Dictionary, 2015; Tajeddini, Ratten, 2020
Analysis of the collected information	Loshkov, 2008; Oyner, Latyshova, 2010; Gulakova, Rebiazina, Smirnova, 2015; Ruekert, 1992; Roersen, Kraaijenbrink, Groen, 2013; Tajeddini, Ratten, 2020
Developing customer relationships	Ryzhkovsky, 2005; Busarkina, 2007; Rusanova, 2008; Tretyak, Rozhkov, 2012; Yuldasheva, Shirshova, 2013; Gulakova, Rebiazina, Smirnova, 2015; Oyner, Panteleeva, Meteleva, Tsygankova, 2018; Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, Kadic-Maglajlic, Miocevic, 2020
Dissemination of information within the	Oyner, Latyshova, 2010; Semenov, Kubakhov, Malkova, 2009; Tretyak, Rozhkov, 2012; Kohli, Jaworski, 1990; Tajeddini,

Process	Sources
company	Ratten, 2020
Development of new products / services / services based on the collected information	Oyner, Latyshova, 2010; Semenov, Kubakhov, Malkova, 2009; Tretyak, Rozhkov, 2012; Reznik, Yashina, 2013; Yuldasheva, Shirshova, 2013; Narver, Slater, 1990; Narver, Slater, MacLachlan, 2004; Molchanov, Rybakova, 2019
Improvement of products / services / services based on the collected information	Oyner, Latyshova, 2010; Semenov, Kubakhov, Malkova, 2009; Tretyak, Rozhkov, 2012; Narver, Slater, 1990; Narver, Slater, MacLachlan, 2004; Yang, Zhang, 2018; Zadykowicz, Chmielewski, Siemieniako, 2020
HR management: training of personnel, increasing its orientation on the customer	Sheresheva, Kostanyan, 2015; Klepneva, Kabalina, 2018; Saxe, Weitz, 1982; Manna, 2017; Morales Mediano, Ruiz-Alba, 2019; Itani, Goad, Jaramillo, 2019; Baber, Kaurav, Paul, 2020

Source: developed by the author.

The highlighted processes correspond to the levels of the customer orientation model; another level important for analysis was also added – a company's personnel. The customer orientation of a company and the customer orientation of employees have a strong relationship, so this level must be taken into account when assessing the customer orientation of a company. Since the processes are closely correlated with each other, it is important to understand their sequence and interrelationships. The processes identified as a result of the literature review describe fairly broad areas of the company's activities. To study not only the presence of the processes themselves, but also their relationship, which reflects the real and not the declared level of the company's customer orientation, it is necessary to highlight specific components in each process. For the sake of completeness, their descriptions are indicated by the departments that participate in each process. Thus, the specification of customer-oriented processes makes it possible to assess their formal presence in the company and understand how successfully they function. Research based on such processes and their components provides an opportunity to objectively evaluate whether the customer orientation of companies is declared or not. The model also displays the antecedents for the development of customer orientation, highlighted in the course of a systematic analysis, which are divided into five blocks: product, top management, approaches to personnel management, cross-functional interaction, and external factors. The impact of customer operation has been identified by: the company's performance, competitive advantage, employees, customers, and management strategies. Therefore, the model summarizes the studies, in the course of which the relationship between customer orientation and other areas of the company was identified. Moderators such as company size and industry have also been added to the model. In a

number of works on different samples and subsamples, differing in industry and company size, some differences were found when analyzing the impact of customer orientation on the performance and other aspects of the company.

The developed conceptual model of customer orientation summarizes the main research results and creates a holistic picture for understanding the concept of customer orientation. The model reflects an integrated approach of understanding the concept of customer orientation of the company, including process and value components; includes the levels of customer orientation of the employee, the company and their ratio; forms the factors influencing the development of customer orientation; highlights areas of customer orientation performance in the company.

3. Development of an integrated approach for evaluation of a company's customer orientation based on the results of testing existing scales on the Russian market

Emerging markets have been under scrutiny over the past three decades. The specifics of emerging markets call into question the possibility of using theories created in developed markets for emerging markets.

Since the transition from a planned to a market economy, Russia has been classified as an emerging market. Taking into account the specifics of emerging markets and the specifics of the Russian economy, the following features of customer orientation in the Russian market are highlighted:

- controversial opinions about the relationship between market orientation and company efficiency;
- inability of companies to adequately assess their customer orientation, declared customer orientation;
- disagreements in the interpretation of customer orientation among companies;
- long-term orientation is not dominant among companies in the Russian market.

Due to these specific features, approaches to assess customer orientation, created for developed markets, cannot be applied in emerging markets without adaptation, since this affects the research result and can distort the data due to the subjective assessment of companies. There are no separate approaches of assessment for emerging markets; the studies use scales created for developed markets that do not take into account the specifics of emerging markets. Thus, an adapted approach to study customer orientation in the Russian market is required.

Table 2 provides a comparative analysis of the scales developed for developed markets.

Table 2 – Comparison of customer orientation evaluation scales

Scale	MKTOR	MARKOR	9 factors scale	MORTN	CUSTOR	Proactive/ reactive market orientation
Authors, year	Narver, Slater, 1990	Kohli, Jaworsky, 1990	Deshpande, Farley, Webster, 1993	Deshpande, Farley 1998	Hajjat, 2002	Narver, Slater, MacLachlan, 2004
Number of CO indicators	6	20	9	10	17	8/7
Emerging market testing	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Scales at the base	–	–	MKTOR, MARKOR	MKTOR, MARKOR and 9 factors scale	–	MOPRO/MORT N
Citation (use in research) Scopus/ WoS	1626 (WoS)	2661 (Scopus)	944 (WoS)	229 (Scopus)	39 (Scopus)	763 (Scopus)
Focus	Value	Process	Value	Process	Value	Process

Source: revised after [Rozhkov, Rebiyazina, Smirnova, 2014; Narver, Slater, MacLachlan, 2004; Deshpande, Farley, Webster, 1993].

As a result of the analysis of the existing scales, it was revealed that their use without adaptation is not applicable for the Russian market. In general, these scales demonstrate a set of tools used by researchers since the 1990s, mainly on materials from developed markets and are potentially possible for use and adaptation on the example of companies from emerging and transitional markets. They do not provide a comprehensive measure of the level of customer orientation of a company. The identified features of customer orientation in the Russian market require the adaptation of existing tools for assessment of customer orientation.

Within the framework of the study, two main stages were conducted: desk research and empirical research. At the stage of desk research, the main scales used to assess customer orientation at the company level were studied and analyzed. On the basis of these scales, a pool of indicators was formed, which was used to conduct the empirical part of the study. The empirical part of the study is aimed at testing existing indicators and finding new ones to form a multivariate model (Table 3), adapted to the specifics of customer orientation on the Russian market. Based on the highlighted definition of customer orientation, which includes both process and value components, an appropriate methodology was developed – mixed study. The combination of several methods, quantitative and qualitative, will allow us to study customer orientation as a multidimensional structure.

As a result of the quantitative stage, responses were collected from 339 respondents from different companies, of which 322 questionnaires were suitable for analysis. Key industries and

regions of Russia were selected for the study. The sample was built on the basis of an intersectoral analysis; when choosing industries and regions, data on the activity of organizations by type of economic activity were taken into account. As a result, a stratified sample was formed based on criteria such as industry, region and company size, taking into account the availability of key respondents in each company. The source of sampling was the SPARK database, the size of the general population of companies in the selected industries was 23 040 companies. The cross-sectional sample for Russia (10 regions, including cities of federal significance) includes 310 enterprises in 11 industries. Questionnaires were excluded in which the respondents chose the position “I find it difficult to answer” in questions about customer orientation (the analysis procedure does not allow for missing values). With a confidence level of 95%, the confidence interval was 1.08%. Of the 24 indicators of the scale, 12 indicators turned out to be suitable for use in the Russian market (Table 3). The factors formed from them: an orientation towards identifying the hidden needs of a client, a declaration of customer orientation and an assessment of customer orientation, determined the specifics of customer orientation on the Russian market.

Table 3 – Indicators for the customer orientation evaluation

№	Indicator	Focus	Factor
1	We are committed to customers	Values	Declaration of customer orientation
3	We understand customer needs	Values	
4	Customer satisfaction is one of our objectives	Values	
5	We offer after-sales service	Process	
7	We help our customers anticipate developments in their markets	Process	Revealing the hidden needs of the customer
8	We continuously try to discover additional needs of our customers of which they are unaware	Process	
9	We incorporate solutions to unarticulated customer needs in our new products and services	Process	
11	We innovate even at the risk of making our own products obsolete	Process	
12	We search for opportunities in areas where customers have a difficult time expressing their needs	Process	
13	We work closely with lead users who try to recognize customer needs, months or even years before the majority of the market may recognize them	Process	
15	We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving customer needs	Process	

№	Indicator	Focus	Factor
21	We have a good sense of how our customers value our products and services	Process	Customer orientation value

Source: developed by the author.

Therefore, the results of the analysis of empirical data confirmed the need to adapt existing tools for assessment of customer orientation. The factors obtained as a result of the analysis did not coincide with the scales from which the complex scale of customer orientation was compiled.

4. Highlighting the specifics of customer orientation of companies in the Russian market

Cluster analysis based on the identified factors revealed five specific types of customer orientation in the Russian market: companies with a high customer orientation, companies with a low customer orientation, companies with a declared customer orientation, companies that intuitively develop customer orientation, and companies focused on developing new products (table 4).

Table 4 – Clusters description

Cluster #	Cluster name	Number of respondents per cluster	«processes» indicators value	«values» indicators value
1	Companies with a high customer orientation	137	High	High
2	Companies with a low customer orientation	48	Low	Low
3	Companies with a declared customer orientation	28	Low	High
4	Companies that intuitively develop customer orientation	58	Middle	Absent
5	Companies focused on developing new products	51	High	Absent

Source: developed by the author.

Clusters differ in the level of development of the process and value components of customer orientation. A high customer orientation of a company is characterized by the presence both at the level of the company's processes and in its values. Companies that develop only the value component of customer orientation, while not having this orientation in their processes, have the declared

customer orientation. The reverse situation, when the company does not promote customer orientation and does not value it, but develops processes aimed at customer satisfaction, characterizes intuitive customer orientation. An absence or low level of development of the value component and processes in the company shows a low customer orientation of a company.

In the second part of the empirical study, in-depth interviews were conducted. To test the main processes characteristic of customer orientation, interviews were conducted with managers of 61 companies. For a deeper study of the processes, heads of marketing, sales or top management of a company were interviewed. The sample included companies operating on the Russian market with different capital ownership: Russian, foreign, and mixed capital. However, the majority of respondents (66%) were representatives of companies with Russian capital.

In-depth interviews with representatives of companies operating in the Russian market helped to identify specific indicators for assessing customer orientation that are not involved in existing tools (Table 5). The respondents singled out: quality of products and services, availability of products, and satisfaction of needs as signs of customer-oriented companies. At the same time, the quality and availability of products are not the criteria for a customer-oriented company, as these characteristics are basic for any company. Therefore, when assessing customer orientation, they should act as blocking factors.

Table 5 – Comparative analysis of indicators in in-depth interviews and customer orientation scales

Indicator	Subconstructs	Frequency of mentions, %	The presence of an indicator in a complex scale
Development according to customer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adaptation of the product to the needs of the client – Product development according to needs – Take into account the needs and requests of the client – Individual approach to the client 	41,9	9. We incorporate solutions to unarticulated customer needs in our new products and services 21. We have a good sense of how our customers value our products and services
Meeting the needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Customer satisfaction – Meeting the needs and requirements of the client 	33,9	–

Indicator	Subconstructs	Frequency of mentions, %	The presence of an indicator in a complex scale
Identifying needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anticipate needs – Identify needs 	25,8	3. We understand customer needs 8. We continuously try to discover additional needs of our customers of which they are unaware 11. We innovate even at the risk of making our own products obsolete 12. We search for opportunities in areas where customers have a difficult time expressing their needs 13. We work closely with lead users who try to recognize customer needs, months or even years before the majority of the market may recognize them
Product and service quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Serviceability – Quality of supplies, convenience of location – Problem solving with products, excellent quality – High quality 	24,2	–
Building long-term customer relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Finding and retaining customers – Building loyalty – Building long-term relationships – Most convenient interaction – Feedback 	22,6	15. We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving customer needs
Availability of products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Products are available and customer-friendly – Optimal prices 	9,7	–

Source: developed by the author.

The results of testing the main processes of customer orientation, highlighted in the conceptual model of customer orientation, confirmed the presence of the declared customer orientation on the Russian market. The difference in the frequency of mentioning processes and their components, by respondents, demonstrates that some companies only create the appearance of customer orientation

(Table 6). The lack of correlations between processes, as well as between processes and their components, indicates that, in some companies, customer orientation is not a single strategy and applies only to certain aspects of its activities. There are gaps between the processes that must complement each other and flow from one another.

Table 6 – Frequency of references by respondents to customer orientation processes and their components

Customer orientation processes and their components	Frequency of mention	Percentage of mention
Customer information collection	57	93,4
Obtaining secondary information	26	42,6
Aggregation of information obtained in personal communications with the client	40	65,6
CRM-system	30	49,2
Analysis of the collected information	46	75,4
Information is analyzed systematically	30	49,2
Information is analyzed upon request / need	22	36,1
Management decisions are made based on the information received	30	49,2
Dissemination of information within the company	51	83,6
Information is freely distributed between departments	34	55,7
All levels of management (from top management to specialists) have free access to information	22	36,1
There is a centralized distribution of key information	9	14,8
Developing customer relationships	38	62,3
Getting customer feedback	51	83,6
Long-term client development plan	18	29,5
There is a system for assessing the development of relations with a client	10	16,4
Development of new products / services / services based on the collected information	32	52,5
The company allocates resources for the development of new products / services	10	16,4
There are established business processes for the development of new products / services	8	13,1
Collecting customer feedback and modification	41	67,2
Improvement of products / services based on the collected information	36	59,0
The company allocates resources to modify existing products / services	16	26,2
There are established business processes for the modification of goods / services	7	11,5
Periodic assessment of the value of goods / services for customers is carried out	21	34,4

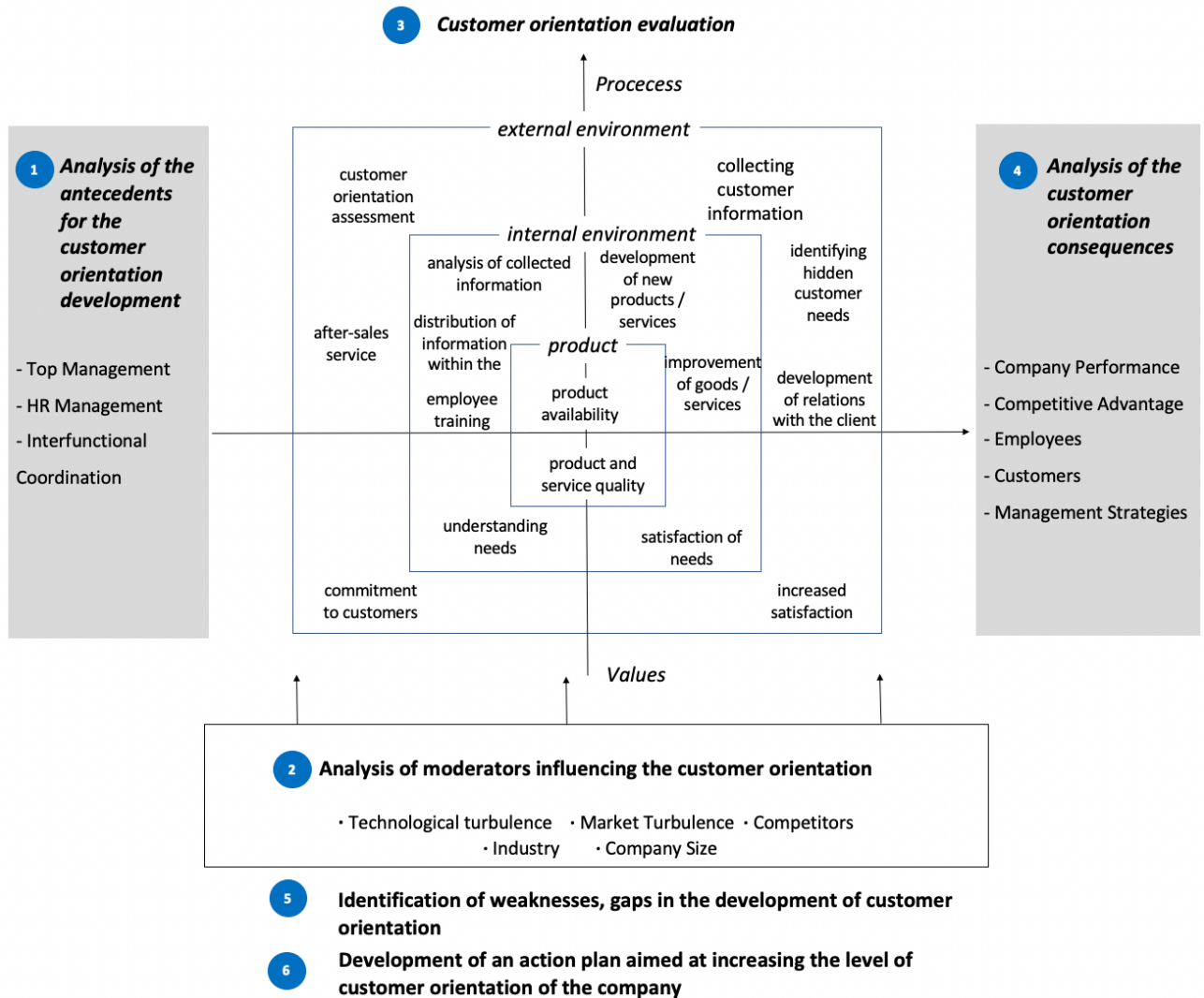
Customer orientation processes and their components	Frequency of mention	Percentage of mention
HR management: training of personnel, increasing its orientation on the customer	28	45,9
Customer focus descends as value from management to employees of the company	26	42,6
Trainings are conducted for the staff	13	21,3
Employee KPIs have a relationship with customer focus	24	39,3

Source: developed by the author.

Using the combined scale tested in the study, the specific features of the customer-oriented approach of companies in the Russian market were revealed. In particular, five specific types of customer orientation on the Russian market are identified: companies with a high customer orientation, companies with a low customer orientation, companies with a declared customer orientation, companies that intuitively develop customer orientation, and companies focused on developing new products. Also, the characteristic features of customer orientation on the Russian market, identified during in-depth interviews, include the presence of a declared customer orientation and the identification of specific indicators: product and service quality, product availability, as well as a fragmented approach to the implementation of customer orientation.

5. Development of a model for formation of the company's customer orientation in the Russian market and its testing

Based on the indicators obtained as a result of empirical research, a model for evaluation and formation of the customer orientation of companies has been developed (Figure 3). The model includes the antecedents for the development of customer orientation in the company, the variables influenced by the customer orientation, moderators that affect the customer orientation of the company, as well as the main part – a tool for the evaluation of the customer orientation of a company. The model makes it possible to evaluate both the value component of the customer orientation of companies and the process. The advantage of the tool lies in obtaining a holistic picture of the company's customer orientation and the ability to identify gaps and weaknesses. An analysis based on this tool assumes obtaining a quantitative evaluation of customer orientation, as well as data for developing recommendations for the development of customer orientation in companies.



Company A is an international manufacturer in the FMCG market. The company employs more than 80 thousand people around the world, and in Russia alone, the company employs about 3 thousand people. Company A is represented on the Russian market by more than 20 brands in various categories. Company B is one of the largest retailers. The main business of the company is the provision of services, or rather the sale of goods, but the company also has several of its own brand products, one of which is aimed at professional users. Company C belongs to the B2B services market. The company started business in Russia in the early 90s but has been operating in the global market for over 90 years. Company D is a Russian company founded in 1994. The company is engaged in the business of selling luxury goods. The company is the official dealer in Russia of well-known global brands in the luxury category; the company has more than two thousand employees.

Based on the results of the analysis of the practices of all four companies, the main elements of customer orientation, identified according to the conceptual model, are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 – The main practices of customer orientation

Characteristic	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Employee's customer orientation	Building personal relationships between managers and clients; cross-functional communication with clients	Regulated rules, personal motivation of employees	Selection of personnel with a focus on customer orientation, building personal relationships	Customer orientation is one of the most important characteristics of personnel dealing directly with customers, which is reflected in the selection and training of personnel
Product	Quality is the key principle of the company	Continuous development of services based on customer needs	Study of current and future customer needs	Maintaining the level of service, constant development of services
Top management	Meetings of top management with clients	Top management is involved in customer problems	Top management demonstrates external and internal customer focus	Customer orientation - the duty and rule of the top management for employees in contact with customers

Characteristic	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
HR management	Structure of departments based on customer needs	Structure based on customer needs, training for employees, focus on coaching	Employee training, coaching and mentoring, attempts to assess the customer orientation of employees	Training, KPI system
Interfunctional coordination	Well-built communication between departments at the process level	There are gaps in communication, a difference in the customer orientation of employees who do and do not interact with customers	Close cross-functional interaction has been built	There is no well-built communication at the process level
External factors	Response to changes in the market, competitors	Response to changes in the market, economy, competitors	The negative impact of economic factors on the company's activities is reflected in the customer focus of employees	Response to changes in the market and economic situation
Impact on company performance	Loyalty programs development	Direct impact at the level of each client	Customer focus is reflected in the company's sales	Understanding the client is one of the key parameters of business success
Impact on competitive advantage	Development of customized plans for top clients	Differentiation based on customer orientation	Customer focus allows customers to expand the package of purchased services	Differentiation based on customer orientation
Impact on employees	The company motivates employees to be customer-oriented	New tools and mechanics allow employees to develop	Internal environment aimed at developing customer orientation, involves all employees in this process	Customer orientation maintains the corporate spirit in the sales department, in other departments this influence is not there
Impact on customers	High assessment of customer orientation from the company's clients	Increasing loyalty	Clients perceive the company as a business development partner	Customer orientation is one of the key decision-making

Characteristic	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
				factors in this industry
Impact on management strategies	Development of eco projects - a response to market challenges	Development of private label, social responsibility in Russia has less impact than in other countries	Not all eco-initiatives resonate with the client, in Russia the eco-aspect is less important than in other countries	The company monitors and implements eco trends
Employees	Building personal relationships between managers and clients; cross-functional communication with clients	Regulated rules, personal motivation of employees	Selection of personnel with a focus on customer orientation, building personal relationships	Customer orientation is one of the most important characteristics of personnel in contact with customers, which is reflected in the selection and training of personnel

Source: developed by the author.

The common practices of customer orientation for the considered cases are: building personal relationships with customers, trainings to develop customer orientation of employees, introduction of coaching systems, differentiation of the company based on a customer-oriented approach, and others. However, there are also processes that were not named by all companies: the study of current and future needs of clients, meetings of top management with clients, and the client's perception of the company as a partner. A comparative analysis of cases also shows one of the weakest points in the development of customer orientation in companies – it is support for customer orientation on the part of cross-functional communication, and for two of the four companies the problem is quite acute. Finally, specific trends in the Russian market can be identified. For example, representatives of two companies mentioned that the ecoinitiatives developed by their companies are receiving a very low response from customers. Their development in Russia is mainly due to the global policy of companies that successfully use ecomarketing to develop customer orientation in other countries. The highlighted successful practices, as well as weaknesses in the development of customer orientation of companies, form the basis for developing recommendations for companies to develop customer orientation.

Based on the obtained model and empirical research data, general recommendations for the development of customer orientation in companies on the Russian market have been developed. As general recommendations for increasing the level of customer orientation for companies operating in the Russian market, there can be singled out the following:

- introduction of quantitative and qualitative methods for assessing the level of customer orientation;
- the use of formalized indicators for assessing customer satisfaction;
- development of long-term strategies, including a plan for the development of customer relations;
- introduction of systems for the regular collection of information about clients;
- creation and use of common systems, databases for storing information about clients;
- formalization of the processes of access and exchange of information within the company.

Based on the conceptual model and indicators obtained as a result of empirical research, a model for assessing and formation of the customer orientation of companies has been developed. The model includes the antecedents for the development of customer orientation in the company, the variables influenced by the customer orientation, moderators that affect the customer orientation of the company, as well as the main part – a tool for assessing the customer orientation of the company. This model is adapted to the specific features of customer orientation on the Russian market

CONCLUSIONS

As part of the dissertation research, a model of formation and evaluation of customer orientation at the company level has been developed, taking into account the specifics of the Russian emerging market. The developed model is based on an in-depth study of the essence of customer orientation, the antecedents for its development, factors influencing its development and variables the impact of customer orientation on which was revealed. Based on the analysis, the definition of customer orientation as a multidimensional structure has been formed.

Based on the literature review, the main stages of customer orientation concept development were identified. The highlighted stages of the evolution of the customer orientation concept reflect the main vector in the development of views on this concept, and also reflect the main directions of research on customer orientation in different periods. For a deeper understanding of the customer orientation concept in the context of the Russian market, the stages of the evolution of the concept of customer orientation are correlated with the main stages of economic development in New Russia.

The developed conceptual model of customer orientation summarizes the main research results and creates a holistic picture for understanding the concept of customer orientation. The model reflects an integrated approach of understanding the concept of customer orientation of the company, including process and value components; includes the levels of customer orientation of the employee, the company and their ratio; forms the factors influencing the development of customer orientation; highlights areas of customer orientation performance in the company. Since customer orientation is a multidimensional structure, a separate emphasis is placed on the process component of customer orientation. The model is refined by the processes identified as a result of a theoretical review of the basic approaches to customer orientation, the study of which is necessary to assess customer orientation.

The first step in compiling a tool adapted to the conditions of the Russian market for assessing the level of customer orientation was the development of a comprehensive scale based on basic scales for developed markets. The results of the conducted quantitative research showed that 12 indicators out of 24 indicators of the scale, turned out to be suitable for use on the Russian market. The factors formed from them: an orientation towards identifying the hidden needs of the client, a declaration of customer orientation and an assessment of customer orientation, determined the specifics of customer orientation on the Russian market. The results of the analysis of empirical data confirmed the need to adapt existing tools for assessing customer orientation. The factors obtained as a result of the analysis did not coincide with the scales from which the complex scale of customer orientation was compiled.

Using the combined scale tested in the study, the specific features of the customer-oriented approach of companies in the Russian market were revealed. In particular, five specific types of customer orientation on the Russian market are identified: companies with a high customer orientation, companies with a low customer orientation, companies with a declared customer orientation, companies that intuitively develop customer orientation, and companies focused on developing new products. Also, the characteristic features of customer orientation on the Russian market, identified during in-depth interviews, include the presence of a declared customer orientation and the identification of specific indicators: product and service quality, product availability, as well as a fragmented approach to the implementation of customer orientation.

Based on the conceptual model and indicators obtained as a result of empirical research, a model for assessing and formation the customer orientation of companies has been developed. The model includes the antecedents for the development of customer orientation in the company, the variables influenced by the customer orientation, moderators that affect the customer orientation of

the company, as well as the main part – a tool for assessing the customer orientation of the company. This model is adapted to the specific features of customer orientation on the Russian market and allows:

- to identify companies with low customer orientation;
- to give a comprehensive evaluation of the customer orientation of the company;
- determine the type of customer orientation used by the company;
- identify existing gaps in the processes;
- to develop recommendations to improve the customer orientation of the company.

The model allows a comprehensive assessment of the level of customer orientation of the company, taking into account the specific features of customer orientation in the Russian market. Unlike the works of other authors on the study of customer orientation, where models and tools created for developed markets were used without adaptation, or customer orientation was only a part of the model and was measured by two or three indicators. The developed model has unique specific indicators obtained from the analysis of empirical data on a sample of Russian companies. Also, the developed model contains a ready-made assessment tool, in contrast to the developed conceptual models.

As part of the dissertation work, a model for evaluation and formation of a company's customer orientation was also tested and general recommendations for companies on the development of a customer-oriented approach were developed. When developing the recommendations, the specifics of the market (B2B / B2C) and the market offer of companies were taken into account. The limitations in this work, first of all, include testing the model based on the data from Russian companies. Also, the limitations of the work include the absence of dependent variables in the analysis, since the focus of the work was to develop an adapted model for formation and evaluation of customer orientation. As future directions for researching customer orientation, it is possible to propose testing the developed model in other emerging markets in order to generalize the concept to all emerging markets. As well as studying and evaluating the effect of the implementation of the developed model and the impact on the company's performance. In the literature, not much attention is paid to the prerequisites for the development of customer orientation in the company, their further study can also be identified as directions for future research. Depending on the field of activity of the company, the level of development of the economy, the size and characteristics of the company, the prerequisites for customer orientation may vary. A more detailed analysis of companies from each cluster can be applied to further study customer orientation in the Russian market.

LIST OF AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS

Based on the dissertation research 5 articles were published in leading scientific peer-reviewed journals out of the list prepared by NRU HSE, the total volume of which is 8.18 pp. (author's contribution – 5.94 pp).

A. Papers published by the author in leading peer-reviewed scientific journals out of the list prepared by NRU HSE:

1. Gulakova, O. V. Spetsifika klientoorientirovannosti kompanii na rossiiskom rynke rezultaty empiricheskogo issledovaniia / O. V. Gulakova, V. A. Rebiazina, M. M. Smirnova // Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Serii 8. Menedzhment. – 2015. – №. 4. – P. 39–73. – 1.49 p.s.
2. Gulakova, O. V. Otsenka klientoorientirovannosti kompanii razrabotka kompleksnoi shkaly i ee adaptatsiia k usloviyam rossiiskogo rynka / O. V. Gulakova, V. M. Panin, V. A. Rebiazina // Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Serii 6. Ekonomika. – 2016. – №. 6. – P. 87–111. – 1.35 p.s.
3. Gulakova, O. V. Klientoorientirovannost kompanii na rossiiskom rynke deklaratsiia ili realnost? / O. V. Gulakova, V. A. Rebiazina // Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Serii 8. Menedzhment. – 2017. – № 3. – P. 398–423. – 1.49 p.s.
4. Gulakova, O. V. Customer Orientation of B2B Firms in Emerging Markets: Evidence from Russia / O. V. Gulakova, V. A. Rebiazina, M. M. Smirnova // Russian Management Journal. – 2019. – Vol. 17. – №. 1. – P. 71–96. – 1.55 p.s.
5. Gulakova, O. V. Osnovnye napravleniia izucheniia klientoorientirovannosti predposylki formirovaniia urovni rezultativnost / O. V. Gulakova // Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Serii 6. Ekonomika. – 2021. – Vol. 21. – №. 2. – P. 73–117. – 2.3 p.s.

B. Other works published by the author in scientific journals on the topic of dissertational research:

1. Gulakova, O. Specific forms of customer orientation in the Russian B2B market: the results of empirical research / O. Gulakova, V. Rebiazina, M. Smirnova // 32nd Annual IMP conference: Poznan University of Economics and Business. – 2016. – P. 28. – 0,03 p.s.
2. Rebiazina, V. Is Customer Orientation of the Russian Companies Real or Declared? / V. Rebiazina, O. Gulakova // GSOM Emerging Markets Conference 2017. Book of abstracts. Saint Petersburg State University. – 2017. – P. 314–316. – 0,23 p.s.