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Faculty of Mechanical Engineering**

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(Quality, Management, Environment, Education, Engineering)

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The Organizers and the Conference Committee believe that the subject of the papers to be presented are in line with the objectives of the conference, but it is not responsible for any data or any other information dispensed in the Proceedings.

Preface

It is our pleasure to invite you, on behalf of the Organizational Committee, to the Eighth International ICQME Conference that will be held on the Montenegrin coast between 24 and 26 September, 2014.

The Eighth International ICQME Conference will be realized in the organization of the Center for Quality of the Mechanical Engineering Faculty in Podgorica, and will be sub organize by the Government of Montenegro. The idea of Conference has first come to life when a need was felt to have the 18th traditional National Conference on Quality Management System (SQM) with the international participation evolve into an international conference, with an extension of thematic areas to be covered.

National Conference on Quality Management System (SQM) with the international participation has been gathering prominent experts from the field of quality over the last ten years. In addition to the local, Montenegro experts, the participation lists included a number of well-known scientists and experts from France, England, Italy, Denmark, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, USA, Turkey, Greece, Czech Republic, Republic of Srpska, Romania, New Zealand, Iran, Canada, UK, Finland, Slovakia and Macedonia.

At the Eighth International ICQME Conference some of the vital issues of quality, management, engineering, education, and environmental protection will be discussed, and the participants will be from both the university and the commercial fields, which will contribute to a more productive exchange of ideas and experiences.

Zdravko Krivokapic, Ph.D.



Milan Perovic, Ph.D.



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CONTENT**PREFACE****CONFERENCE COMMITTEE****PAPER SESSIONS**

<i>Analysis Of Wbc Regional Enterprises Needs From The Aspect Of Qms.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Miladin Stefanović, Slavko Arsovski, Danijela Tadić, Snežana Nestić, Aleksandar Aleksić</i>	
<i>Quality And Finance: Past, Present, And Future</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Slavko Arsovski, Zora Arsovski</i>	
<i>Systems Approach To Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Tadeja Jere Jakulin</i>	
<i>Tool Shape Impact On Quality Of Welded Fsw Joint Of Aluminium 5083</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Sanja Miljanić, Darko Bajić, Milenko Perović</i>	
<i>ISO Standards Framework To Guide Organizations In Improving Performance</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Miloš Petronijević, Aleksandar Đorđević</i>	
<i>QMS In Higher Education Study Programs In Bosnia And Herzegovina</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Sabahudin Jašarević, Samir Lemeš</i>	
<i>Needs Analysis Of Enterprises In Bosnia And Herzegovina From The Aspect Of QMS.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Sabahudin Jašarević, Samir Lemeš</i>	
<i>In The Labyrinth Of Risk Society Towards Progress, To Follow Trends Of Science And Sustainable Development.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Mitar Lutovac, Nizama Redžović, Fuad Nicević, Mirsada Badić, Tanja Milešević, Dragan Radoman, Dragan Klarić, Rade Biočanin</i>	
<i>Corporate Culture As A Factor In The Quality Of Organization Globalization Of Economic Processes.....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Kovalevskyy Sergiy, Kosheva Ludmila</i>	
<i>Towards Quality Assurance Processes In The Modern University</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>Kovalevskyy Sergiy, Kosheva Ludmila</i>	
<i>Virtue Ethics And Personal Characteristics Of Auditors</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>Zdravko Krivokapić, Jelena Jovanović, Aleksandar Vujović</i>	
<i>Implementation And Evaluation Of Quality Management Systems In The Slovak Republic</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>Zuzana Kapsdorferová</i>	
<i>Impact Of Social Networks On Loyalty.....</i>	<i>107</i>
<i>Krešimir Buntak, Ivana Droždek, Martina Bačić</i>	

<i>Development Of Quality Management System In Montenegro</i>	115
<i>Jelena Jovanović, Zdravko Krivokapić, Aleksandar Vujović</i>	
<i>"5 S" As A Tool Of Lean Manufacturing Concept</i>	131
<i>Dušan Đurović, Miodrag Bulatović</i>	
<i>Quality Assurance And Traceability In The Variable Manual Assembly Process</i>	137
<i>Peter Eniko, Davorin Kramar, Jelena Jovanović, Mirko Soković</i>	
<i>Analyzes Of The Spanish Provision Of The Training Programs And Education Related To Quality Management Systems</i>	145
<i>Luc Honore Petnji Yaya, Frederic Marimon, Josep Llach, Merce Bernardo</i>	
<i>Innovation Management Systems (Ims) And Its Integration With Quality Management Systems (Qms) - The Portuguese Case Of Np 4457:2007</i>	163
<i>Paulo Baptista</i>	
<i>Analysis Of Training Programs In The Field Of Qms In Poland</i>	175
<i>Piotr Kafel, Tadeusz Sikora</i>	
<i>Analysis Of Experiences On Quality Management In Poland</i>	183
<i>Paweł Nowicki, Tadeusz Sikora</i>	
<i>Quality Management System: Backgrounds, Knowledge And Experience Of Spanish Industries</i>	193
<i>Luc Honore Petnji Yaya, Frederic Marimon, Alexandra Simon, Marti Casadesus</i>	
<i>Implementation Of Lean Manufacturing In A Greek Food And Beverage Industrial Plant</i>	209
<i>A. Nika, F. Armaou, N.M. Vaxevanidis</i>	
<i>Management quality determines quality of life</i>	219
<i>Vasyl H. Gerasymchuk</i>	

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IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON LOYALTY

Abstract:

Customer or user satisfaction is one of the fundamental principles of quality management. However, customer satisfaction is actually caused by the current sense of his knowledge and feelings related to a product and service. Satisfaction is the central requirement for success; however, it is not always and must not be sufficient. Modern business conditions conditioned by dynamic environment, and a large and varied, but no different offer, are looking for a new dimension of customers. They are seeking for customer loyalty thereby ensuring customers' retention, long-term customers, price benefits, increase of sales at customers and referrals to potential business partners. The importance of loyalty was recognized by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and defines the seven motivational factors for the establishment of a process of loyalty. A major role in creating a loyalty has got the marketing function. This paper analyses the impact of marketing activities through social networks at the loyalty function.

Key words: *Loyalty, Quality management, Social networks, EFQM*

1. INTRODUCTION

From its beginnings to the present the philosophy of quality has undergone a major transformation in terms of the focus from the product to the organization, and to the general environment and the general good. Also the process orientation and "end - to - end" principle directed the concept of quality management in the marketing aspect where everything begins and ends on the market, or at a customer or a user. This ultimately led to the evolution in terms of improvements and views on the management system that has evolved from quality control when the focus was on the product, to business excellence where the focus is much more complex and accentuated through the technical, organizational, economic and sociological aspects. Schematic representation of the key representatives is given in Figure 1.

There are also many changes in marketing, especially in weighing new technological capabilities and their use in gaining favour of the customer. Taking into account the development and application of IT in everyday life, more and more companies are obtaining loyal customers with the help of social networks. Through the application of social networking with enterprise customers can quickly and easily get in touch consequently enabling two-way communication, and allowing the enterprise to build a friendly and trustworthy relationship with costumers. Enterprises can also highlight ahead of their competition and thereby increase sales. The aim of this study is to investigate whether companies when advertising their products through social networks and continuously informing customers about novelties can affect customers and their loyalty.

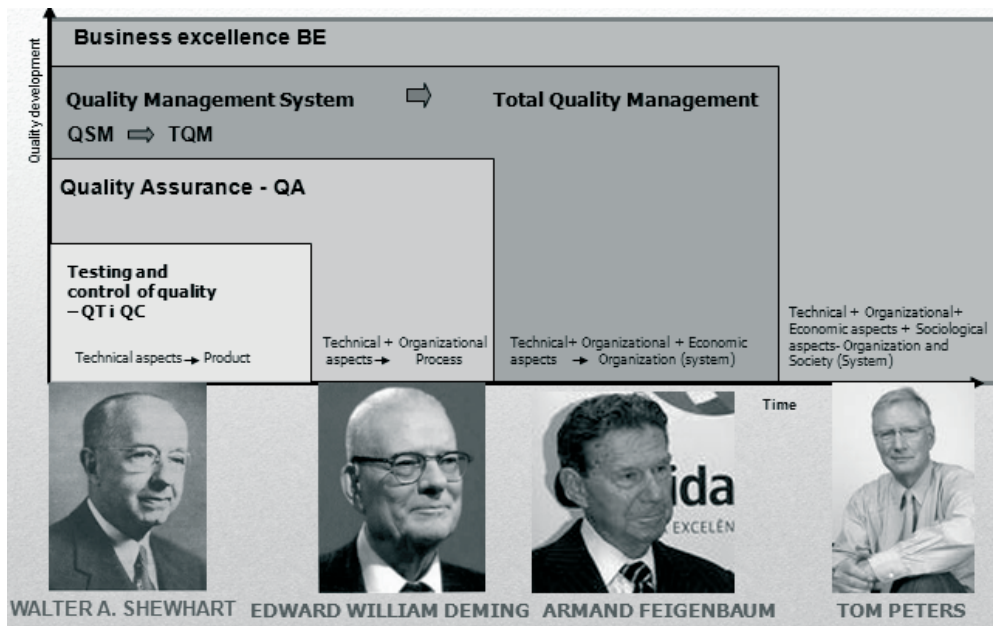


Figure 1. Basic principles and development of the concept of quality management
Source: original copyright

Also, it is of great importance to know which key factors of business and marketing activities are significantly affecting loyalty, or whether two-way communication between the customer and the company can leverage on increasing customer loyalty to the company. Hypotheses of work that will be shown in this paper are:

1. Consumer's loyalty can be affected through social networks, and
2. Consumer's loyalty is differently affected with different parameters.

2. LOYALTY

2.1. Definition of loyalty

For a long time it was thought that customer's satisfaction is the most important for the success in the market. Large organizations that have established a system of customer satisfaction saw that success does not only depend on this. The customer must feel satisfied while using the product and the product must be remembered with satisfaction. Although the satisfaction is important in the building of a brand, and is one of the conditions for success, it makes a profit only in the current period. In order to achieve long-term business to profitability it must tend to a higher dimension -loyalty. Environmental aspects of customer's loyalty to an organization's operations are schematically shown in Figure 2.

Customer's loyalty can be defined as the satisfaction of an organization or individual joint operations, and in certain cycles repeated purchases of products or services.¹ A loyal customer is committed to constantly or frequently buy from the same manufacturer, and is committed to a particular brand, product or store. Loyal customers are willing to pay more for benefits they are sure they will get as well as they will be more tolerant of increasing prices. A high level of loyalty reduces costs in the future due to less need for permanently attracting new customers. A loyal customer is not a coincidence; it is a concept that is being built. Customer's loyalty can serve as an indicator of how the company was successful in the past, present, and as an indicator of future performance. The benefits of loyalty are not current. Loyalty entails a whole series of events that result in the growth of the company. Stores often have the opinion that a dissatisfied

¹ Kondić, Ž: Kvaliteta i ISO 9000, Varaždin, 2002

customer will never come back. He will not come back if the situation that led to the dissatisfaction is poorly resolved.

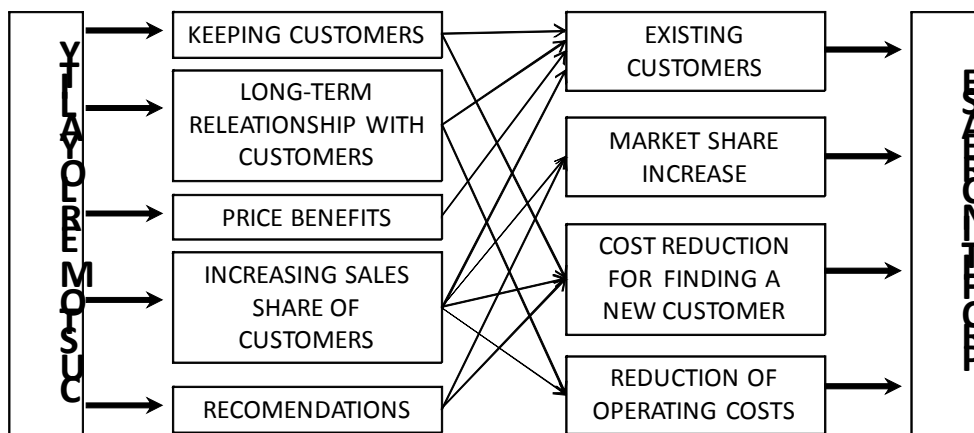


Figure 2. Schematic view of various aspects of the impact of customers loyalty on business
Source: Kondić, Ž. : Kvaliteta i ISO 9000, Varaždin, 2002

There are many reasons why a company should strive for loyal customers: loyal customer spends more and brings higher profits; understands and appreciates the value that is given to him; despite the lower price at the competition, loyal customer will purchase their products; loyal customers are the best marketing managers for the company, because they make the best advertisement through referrals to others, regardless of the competition which is trying to win customers for themselves, since they still remain loyal to their brand, and thus loyal customers plague the competition.² The company where customers are loyal has a great atmosphere, which raises the morale of employees and prevents them from leaving.

2.2. CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Taking into account customer's satisfaction as one of the fundamental principles, and concepts of satisfaction of stakeholders and sustainable business, the concept developing of quality management is still directed towards loyalty. Satisfaction and loyalty do not exclude that the organization should focus its strategic goals of satisfaction to loyalty. It is important to emphasize the fact that there is no systematic and automatic impact of customer's satisfaction on loyalty and vice versa, as can be seen in the matrix shown in Figure 3.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly dynamic and competitive market • low product differentiation • specific rules (habits) preferences of customers • limited product availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • buyers enthusiastic with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + product + price + relationship • good loyalty program
	LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no value through the eyes of customer ➢ poor quality ➢ non-price competition ➢ bad reputation ➢ disadvantage • available substitutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific market rules (monopoly) • internal buyers • convenience • shortage of substitutes • high costs of change • excellent loyalty program
		LOW	HIGH
		CUSTOMER LOYALTY	

Figure 3. Matrix of relationship between loyalty and customer satisfaction
Source: Kondić, Ž: Kvaliteta i ISO 9000, Varaždin, 2002

² http://www.biznis-akademija.com/B.akademija-Zasto-je-vazno-izgraditi-lojalnost-kupca_768

EFQM defines customer's loyalty as "doubly behaviour which result is on the one hand in efficient and effective extension and development of business relations, and on the other hand in the recommendation of the organization, its name and character, its products and services to a potential buyer" (EFQM Customer Loyalty)³. Study of loyalty has identified seven motivating factors for establishing loyalty: enthusiasm, satisfaction, rules and inertia, partnership, interdependence, market position and competitive offer, which are schematically shown as their impact on loyalty in Figure 4.

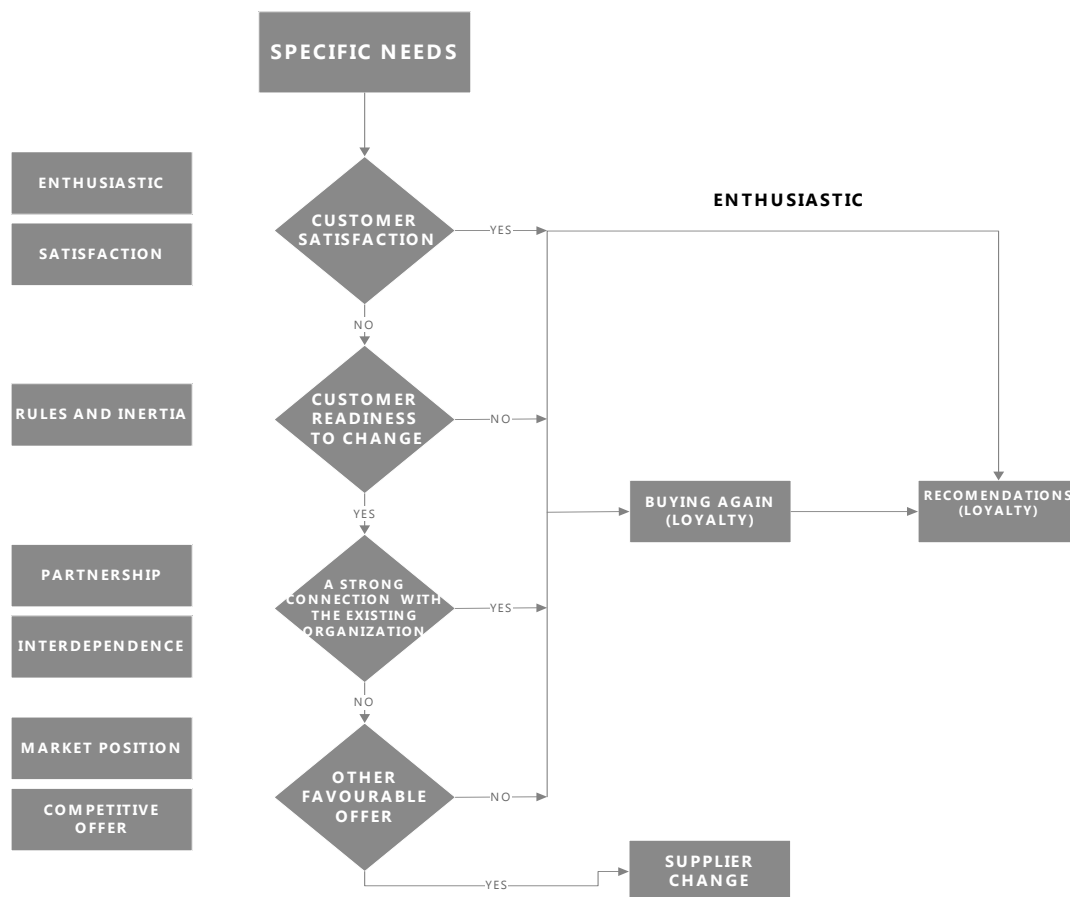


Figure 4. Seven motivating factors for the establishment of a loyalty process to the EFQM Source: Kondić, Ž: *Kvaliteta i ISO 9000, Varaždin, 2002*

3. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON BUSINESS

Today exist dozens of online social networks on the Internet. What they have in common is to connect people worldwide with similar interests. Social networks are defined as a web service through which individuals create a personal profile, public (all users have access to) or restricted (only certain users have access), regulate it, communicate with acquaintances, create groups and photo galleries and share content. Some social networks have achieved great success when it comes to the number of users who actively use social network, because of the ability to quickly adjust. Currently in the world, according to the number of active users, among the most popular social networks are Facebook, Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn⁴.

³ EFQM CustomerLoyalty, A key to business growth and profitability“, CustomerLoyaltyteam, March, 1996

⁴ <http://www.socialmediaarts.com/resources/social-networking>

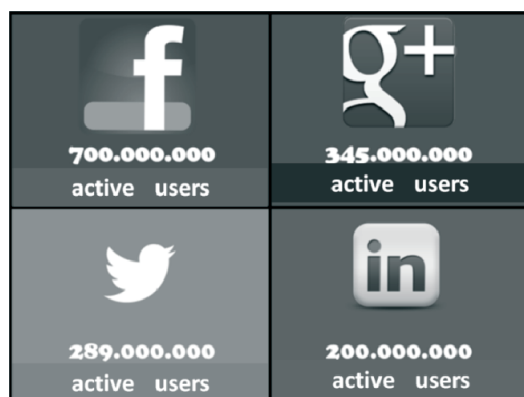


Figure 5. Most popular social networks based on the number of users
 Source: original copyright

Social networks today represent the most popular websites. They have become a worldwide hit, providing users with an easier and faster way of communicating, a chance to meet new people and serve for the mutual exchange of information. Communication with consumers has changed significantly, and the social network has become an important factor influencing consumer behaviour. Business users find that social networks are enabling faster and easier communication with customers and consumers, and more and more people through social networks improve their business or find new business partners. Consumers are increasingly using profiles on social networks to inform on companies, products and services. In the centre of attention is the user, not the product. Additionally, a promotion of company and product, product advertising, sales promotion and constant contact with consumers, respectively direct communication with the target group, and past, current and future clients, is provided. Through social networks, organizations have enabled the realization of a number of activities such as market research, new product development, improvement in customer relationships, increase of e-commerce, the successful launch of new products, increasing the familiarity of the product or brand and most importantly strengthening the loyalty and trust of customers⁵. Prior to the commencement of activities on social networks, it is necessary to make a proper analysis of the market or otherwise time and money are being wasted. Sales to accomplish through social networks depend on how the content is interesting to the target audience. It must be clear and focused on what potential buyers are interested in. When organizations establish two-way communication via social networks, they also create a community of loyal consumers with which they build a friendly relationship based on trust. Clients and potential clients are regularly reported on the work of the company, all the news, developments, and events and are educated about the products. The impact of social networks on business can certainly be great. As stated, the advantages are numerous, and precisely this mode of communication should be attractive to more companies due to the fact that there are relatively little costs, yet simultaneously a network of fans that will promote products and primarily increase customer loyalty is being created.

4. IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON LOYALTY

For the purpose of the research a questionnaire was made and was conducted on a sample of 300 respondents, of which 205 were female and 95 male subjects. The research was carried out from March to June of 2013 across the Croatia, among people of different age groups who use the Internet and social networks. The aim of research was to prove that with two-way communication, customer-supplier that takes place through social networks can affect on customer loyalty. Consequently two main hypotheses were defined: consumer's loyalty can be

⁵ Quarantotto, S., Perčić, M. : Velemajstorske tajne zarade, zabave i marketinga na internetu, Rovinj, 2013

affected through social networks, as well as that different parameters differently affect on consumer loyalty. The resulting sample is appropriate including sexes, different ages, completed level of education and monthly income (Table 1).

Table 1: "Structure of samples (N = 300)"

		N	%
GENDER	MEN	95	31.67
	WOMEN	205	68.33
PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION	PRIMARY SCHOOL	0	0
	SECONDARY SCHOOL	227	75.67
	engineer, BSc	70	23.33
	MSc, PhD	3	1
AGE GROUP	Up to 20 years	32	10.67
	21-30	175	58.33
	31-40	60	20
	41-50	15	5
	51-60	18	6
	60 i više	0	0
MONTHLY INCOME	Below average	93	31
	Average	171	57
	Above average	36	12

Source: original copyright

The importance of two-way communication buyer-supplier via social networks is what was evaluated in the questionnaire in order for the received results to show which criteria during two-way communication are most important to them and which are less important, i.e. criteria that may affect their loyalty. Resulting data show that for the respondents of the utmost importance is rapidly access to information and news about the brand and more flexible and faster communication, while their least important is strengthening the sense of connection to the brand and is exactly in this issue reached the highest approval respondents. Sorting respondents by gender obtained results shows that for male respondents the most important are quick access to information and news about the brand and more flexible and faster communication while the least important is a sense of the contribution to the success of the brand. For female respondents on the other hand of the utmost importance is the possibility of complaints and quick access to information and news about the brand, while strengthening the sense of connection with the brand is of the least importance. Sorting by qualifications shows that for respondents with secondary education are of the utmost importance quick access to information and news about the brand, while strengthening the sense of connection with the brand is of the least importance. For the respondents with the title of engineer, BSc., the most important is the possibility of complaints, while the least important is sense of contribution to the success of the brand. The number of respondents with the title MSc, PhD, was the lowest, and the results show that, for them, of the utmost importance is possibility of complaints, while the least important is adaptive and personalized content, strengthening the sense of connection with the brand and more flexible and faster communication. In the sorting by the age group, the results show that for respondents up to 20 years the most important is quick access to information and news about the brand, however two-way communication affecting on the increase of loyalty is of the least importance. The age group of 21 to 30 years gave the highest grade to the opportunities of complaints, while the impact on the attitude of others about popular brands is the least important for this age group. For respondents aged of 41 to 50 years the most important is to reduce the cost of communication, while their ability to praise good product and strengthening a sense of

connection to the brand is of the least importance. The age group of 51 to 60 years consider that the most important is quick access to information and news, but the least important is strengthening the sense of connection to the brand. The last sort of respondents was made by monthly income. The results obtained showed that for the respondents with below-average monthly income the most important is fast access to the information about the brand, more flexible and faster communication and reducing communication costs. Strengthening the sense of connection with the brand for people with below-average incomes is of the least importance. The most important issue for people with average monthly income is the possibility of complaints, while strengthening the sense of connection with the brand is of the least importance for people with below-average monthly income. Respondents with above-average incomes find of utmost importance fast access to the information and news about the brand. However, the activity and the two-way communication affecting on increase in the satisfaction for these respondents is of their least importance. The results show that using social networks can affect on consumer loyalty, which proves the hypothesis 1. Each criteria has a different meaning, but there are still very important and less important criteria, and specifically these very important ones prove consumer loyalty on social networks. The most important question in the questionnaire for respondents was fast access to information, which is very important to users that at any time have access to the latest information, and that they can ask any inquiry, put comments and compliments, which certainly affects on their loyalty. The next most important issue is more flexible and faster communication, which means that prompt reply of administrator to requests and questions of customers, increases their loyalty. Also, with the analysis it was proven that different parameters differently affect on consumer loyalty, thereby proving the second hypothesis. Since in the analysis gender, education, age group and monthly income of the respondents disaggregated the obtained data, we can clearly see that the criteria are essential to particular group. This means that different groups react differently with selected criteria of loyalty. By classifying respondents according to these groups we can see that there are some discrepancies of the most important criteria, and that each group has its own key criteria. So questions about loyalty are responded differently between men and women. People with secondary education have different important criteria than those who are highly educated, and the same goes for the age of the respondent and to their monthly income. Using these data, it was easier to reach specific target groups, because it is proven that each group has its own essential criteria that must be complied with. The study results also show that Facebook is actually the most popular websites for social networking, and that truly became a term for social networks. This is supported by figures that 89% of respondents are most active on Facebook as a social network, and that the Facebook is not only a good marketing tool but it is also a good place for online business. Therefore, advertising on Facebook is currently the most efficient on the Internet (Table 2).

Table 2: "Social networks with the highest attendance to the research results"

SOCIAL NETWORKS	TOTAL	AVERAGE
Facebook	267	89%
Google +	16	5,33%
Twitter	9	3%
Other (LinkendIn, Instagram, Tumbri)	8	2,67%

Source: original copyright

Exactly these results presented above prove that Facebook keeps convincing first place on a scale of most popular social networks and that this social network has the greatest impact on loyalty.

5. CONCLUSION

The expansion of social networks has resulted in the fact that in today's culture they have become an indispensable part of everyday life. Companies in them perceive the "fertile ground", and are developing different ways of advertising every day. Companies that are technologically aware perceive social networks as an excellent way of communicating with consumers. Consumers of a new generation want availability and speed in communication with the company as well as speed in satisfying their requirements and needs which is through social networks easily achievable. Although it is difficult to create loyal consumer when at any given moment there is a range of competitive products, however social networks enable to accomplish what is proven with research. Various consumer groups have different criteria, and therefore they need to be approached so as to satisfy their most important criteria. They will then, with greater pleasure monitor a specific profile of the brand, and be active in discussions and queries. Furthermore, it is essential to have updated employees that correspond in the name of the company, in order to present customers with the latest information and news. In that way its consumer's loyalty of a brand is increasing because their needs and requirements are fulfilled, and therefore it has a positive effect on the company's business and ensures its future performance.

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