
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONSHIPS: BRANDING AND PURCHASING DECISIONS IN THE PUMPS MARKET

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Abstract

The paper discusses customers' purchasing behavior in the industrial pumps market. Considering the increase in the global competition among suppliers, they must design and employ customer-oriented strategies to compete successfully in the market. The empirical analysis is based on the survey data from a sample of 133 industrial pump buyers. The importance of each of the supply factors that are important for a successful sales process is analyzed. The results show that the brand of industrial pumps has a statistically greater influence on smaller customers than

on larger customers. The study contributes to the existing literature on purchase decision-making and industrial branding. A broader potential application of the results is discussed, and possible research directions in this area are presented at the end, given the limitations of this study.

Keywords: *customer behavior, industrial pumps, industrial branding, B2B markets, purchasing decisions, perceptions*

1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of brands is traditionally understood as a relevant “*asset and a source of competitive advantage in purchasing decisions, as customers are expected to prefer stronger brands to minimize risks.*” (Gomes et al., 2016: 193) Despite this often empirically proven fact, the role of brands in industrial markets remains unclear and under-researched. This paper aims to study the relevance of branding for purchasing decisions in an

industrial market setting and some other key purchasing determinants.

Pumps are technically complex machines, so knowledge of the development and operation of pumps is the basis for proper sales and customer advice. A pump can be described as a machine used to pump and transport fluid from a lower to a higher position employing a mechanical part. Choosing the right pump (for a particular industrial process) requires specific knowledge and experience. Although pumps are

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similar in appearance, there are countless designs to meet specific requirements. To select the right pump, several parameters must be determined. Therefore, it is essential to understand the decision-making process of customers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Industrial marketing

Industrial marketing (B2B – business to business) differs slightly from marketing between organizations and end customers in terms of activities and behavioral specifics (Hall, 2017). In households, consumers use products for personal satisfaction, while in organizations, they buy goods and services to produce other products or carry out other activities. The most important industries that comprise B2B markets are forestry, mining, agriculture, transport, construction, manufacturing, communications, banking, insurance, and services. These chains are characterized by limited competition and long-term interdependence between suppliers and customers (Tavčar, 2007). Market behavior between organizations occurs between the sales and purchasing departments and other departments at different levels and functions (Witell et al., 2020). Such marketing is not only sales but also integration and coordination. B2B markets are characterized by a smaller number of larger customers who make most of the purchases in the industry. As a result, transactions involving more significant amounts of money and larger quantities are completed in these markets compared to the consumer market. This requires a thorough marketing approach by the company, both in purchasing and sales. Such an approach leads to market research and study, harmonizing market conditions, establishing market channels,

communication, and negotiation. In industrial marketing, the product is the sum of all tangible and intangible components of the business process with which the supplier organization meets the needs of the customer organization. It is no longer just about the product but also about pre- and post-sales activities, knowledge, safety, services, and reputation. Customers purchase these to meet their requirements and desires (Meško Štok, 2011).

The relationship between the partners (type of the relationship) has often been highlighted as the dimension of choice for appropriate procurement strategies to which the strategic goals of the purchasing function are added (Swan and Westerlund, 2009). Their study was later extended (Terpend et al., 2011) by proposing procurement market characteristics as the third dimension (degree of industry rivalry and competitiveness). Talaja et al. (2017) indicate that competitive advantage mediates the relationship between the company's market orientation and business performance.

2.2. Purchasing decisions

Many factors can influence the purchasing decision of an industrial buyer, including, of course, the quality of the product, price, advertising, advice from sales personnel, brand, sales promotion, accessibility, information available online, after-sales service support, etc. (Kotler and Keller, 2015). Thus, the need for a customer-driven marketing strategy is no longer a question (Brennan et al., 2017). One of the most substantial effects on purchase intention is perceived product quality (Almquist et al., 2018). Still, several studies have already demonstrated that it is less significant compared to price or brand (Alavijeh et al., 2019). Another study (Grewal et al., 2000)

suggests that physical contextual cues may mitigate the price effect on the perceived post-purchase quality. Advertising in B2B is often considered unnecessary. Still, recent findings support B2B advertising and recommend spending because of its positive effects, particularly in services, real estate, insurance, finance, construction, and manufacturing (Guenther and Guenther, 2020). Research comparing the influence of industrial brands and consumer goods brands on B2B buyers' purchase intentions has shown that the latter also has critical brand equity in the B2B market (Viardot, 2017). First, their top-of-mind awareness is more substantial than exclusively professional brands, as they are perceived as more expensive and efficient. A robust industrial brand can also positively influence perceived quality (Cretu and Brodie, 2007).

A recent study (Saab and Botelho, 2019) demonstrates that an overpriced material or product could lead business decision-makers to judge such a product as less prone to functional failures. Unexpectedly, the authors report that this is especially true regarding product features that can be verified before purchase through inspection or accessible sources rather than, as expected, for products that require the evaluation of specific technical knowledge. Such "search" features can be measured impartially and accessed during decision-making, e.g., productivity, durability, and energy consumption. As a logical conclusion, it would not be recommendable for sales personnel to lower prices to be more competitive.

In Slovenia, a study (Ivančič and Kos Koklič, 2013) was conducted on the relationship between the purchasing behavior of organizations and marketing relationships in the industrial market, which shows that most of the Slovenian companies

studied focus more on efficiency than on the effectiveness of operations, even when purchasing strategically essential materials, that is supposed to be purchased through strategic partnerships developed with suppliers. The reasons the authors found for such behavior are a) the incomparably smaller size of a customer's organization compared to large international suppliers, b) the market abundance of suppliers of compatible materials, and c) features of the final product due to lack of distinctiveness or a high proportion of material in the final product. These results conclude that manufacturing companies in Slovenia do not invest enough attention in developing relationships with their suppliers, which could lead to better effectiveness and good operational efficiency.

The literature highlights that B2B purchasing markets include relational and transactional practices, emphasizing relational practices because there is usually a clear intention to do long-term business (Lindgreen et al., 2013). Relationship quality affects B2B sales directly, and this outcome can be enhanced by introducing a loyalty program (Kwiatek et al., 2020). Other studies (Rejali, 2021) do not confirm a direct effect of relationship quality on behavioral loyalty in the B2B environment. However, they have demonstrated the negative impact of unstable markets on the connection between the buyer's perceived value and the relationship. Kittur and Chatterjee (2020) argue that service-based and goods-based brand images have positive relationships as drivers of B2B loyalty, while customer satisfaction acts as a mediator. Therefore, the role of a B2B brand in purchase decisions also needs to be investigated in the industrial pump market.

Möller and Pesonen (1981) argue the importance of loyalty for small business

contractors to reduce purchasing risk and limit the need to search for information; they tend to re-purchase from the existing supplier even if the quality of competing excavator models is considered better. Ellegard (2009) says that small businesses place a low priority on purchasing and do not devote much of their resources to developing their purchasing capabilities.

The results of Urbanian and Cyplik's (2022: 126) study indicate that for manufacturers, the most important sources of information about suppliers were "*suppliers' websites, sending the offer by suppliers, direct contacts of the management/specialists employed in the enterprise with suppliers and the visits of sales representatives of suppliers.*" Dyer and Hatch (2004) emphasize the importance of using supplier networks and their consulting potential to learn faster. Kaski et al.'s (2018) study confirm previous studies (Moncrief et al., 2006) suggesting that consultative, value-added sales profiles depend on high levels of interactional skills, e.g., building rapport. While Grossberg (2015) reports that traditionally the customer is assigned a sales consultant, today's customer self-selects their sales consultant while attending to the customer experience.

2.3. Branding in an industrial purchase decision context

Branding is creating a company's recognition based on the association of the company name or brand with specific characteristics, establishing the company's reputation, image, and identity (Melewar et al., 2020). This is not about marketing, which is essentially a strategy for branding (i.e., how we achieve the goals we want to achieve with branding), but rather about creating a story that the company wants to plant in the subconscious of customers

and potential customers, it is about providing content about the company, product or service, demonstrating their characteristics to the market, creating the desired identity with the selected characteristics and reputation among customers and competitors (Wheeler, 2018).

Branding has always been a sensitive topic in the B2B environment. Originally from the B2C world, the importance of brands for B2B companies has never reached the same level. Once a logo and some related guidelines have been created, branding is usually considered done. This shows that even today's B2B companies still tend to underestimate the far-reaching power that successful brands can yield over the company (Ives and Müllner, 2021).

Zablah et al.'s (2010: 248) study of the relative importance of brands in modified rebuy purchase situations suggests that "*under conditions of low, competitive intensity or when marketing maintenance repair and operations supplies, brand consciousness is the primary determinant of brand importance.*" Brown et al.'s (2012: 508) research confirms that "*the relationship between purchase complexity and brand sensitivity appears stronger when buying firms are small and have prior contractual ties with their selling partners.*"

Brand awareness includes branding and brand recognition (Gopinath, 2019). A brand is the general idea or image of a company that is associated with its product and can define it in the eyes of the company's customers. The product name, models, logo, and all other characteristics that make up the company's personality are part of the brand (Bresciani and del Ponte, 2017). They appear on and around the product and differentiate it from similar products on the market. Cretu and Brodie's (2007) research

findings suggest that brand image influences customers' perceptions of product and service quality when manufacturers market to small businesses. To gain a deeper insight into these complex relationships, it was decided to conduct an exploratory case study of purchasing decisions in the industrial pump market.

2.4. Industrial pumps

In manufacturing companies, pumps are critical machines enabling efficient and convenient production. They provide distribution, dosing, and mixing of the desired medium and facilitate employees' work. So, it can be said that manufacturing companies depend on them and will continue to do so in the future. In industrial processes that depend on the flow of liquids, the right choice of a quality pump is the key to an efficient and smooth industrial process. Naturally, the range of industrial pumps on the market is growing, so customers often doubt which pump is most suitable for them. Therefore, in the purchasing decision-making phase, several factors and information sources influence the pump's final purchase. Every manufacturer and supplier of industrial pumps aims to satisfy customers' needs as much as possible during and after the purchase. With such an approach, they attract new and retain existing customers and spread positive information among them. The need-to-get-to-know customers better always arise when at least two homogeneous products on the market meet the same need. Therefore, researching customers' purchasing behavior is crucial for any marketer. With the help of the information obtained, e.g., when, how, what, and where customers buy products, marketers can successfully satisfy their customers and expand and maintain the company's existence in the market. As Buble et al. (2003) argue, satisfied customers are not those who

have purchased a product but are willing to repeat the purchase. And the pump brand might play an essential role in the purchasing decision.

Based on the previous discussion, we analyze the following research question: *Which factors influence purchasing activities of smaller and larger businesses in the market for industrial pumps in Slovenia?*

Following theory and previous findings, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: The brand of industrial pumps has a greater impact on smaller customers than on larger customers.

Hypothesis 2: For smaller customers who buy pumps less frequently, the sales consultant is statistically significantly more critical than the other sources of information.

Hypothesis 3: For larger customers who buy pumps more frequently, quality is a statistically significantly more critical factor in the purchase decision than the brand, price, promotions, advertising, and advice from the salesperson.

3. METHODS AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

A non-random sample was used for the research. Male and female respondents between the ages of 18 and 65 who decide on or perform the purchase of industrial pumps in different industries were selected.

For the questionnaire, an online survey was used, designed following the theory, to obtain the desired data. It allows us to respond to the set hypotheses and pursue the set goals. The online questionnaire was

created and published on the lka web portal, and all respondents remained anonymous in the survey. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions, five related to socio-demographic factors. In contrast, the remaining questions were designed to investigate the purchasing habits of industrial pump buyers in the Slovenian market.

To obtain enough responses to the questionnaire, we decided to conduct an online survey because it was the most accessible and quickest for respondents to complete. The questionnaire was published on the web portal www.lka.si and was active for ten days. The invitation to participate in the survey was sent as an e-mail with a link to the online questionnaire. The analysis showed that 206 respondents clicked on the link, out of which 133 completed the questionnaire. In the final analysis, only the responses of those respondents who completed the online survey in full were considered.

Data obtained from the online survey were analyzed using the statistical tools provided by the SPSS Statistics 17.0 statistical program. The variables were summarized using appropriate descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation), and then the hypotheses were tested using ANOVA tests. The obtained results of the quantitative data analysis were compared with the theory.

Insights into the socio-demographic characteristics of industrial pump buyers in the Slovenian market were obtained by answering questions about the number of employees, the revenue numbers in the previous year, the respondent's job in the company, and the number of pumps purchased in the company in the past year. In this way, we aimed to determine the size of the companies surveyed. The criteria were

set following the Slovenian Companies Act (ZGD-1, 2016), which determines the criteria for the size of a company.

The sample includes 133 respondents, out of which 25.6% (34) were from micro companies, 27.1% (36) were from small companies, 24.8% (33) were from medium companies, and 22.6% (30) were from large companies. The sales revenues were divided into four clusters according to the ZGD-1. Most companies had between 700,000 and 8,000,000€ net annually (27.8% of the sample) and more than 40,000,000 € (27.8%), followed by companies with revenues of up to 700,000 € (23.3%) and companies with revenues from 8,000,000 to 40,000,000 € (21.1%). The sample shows that the largest share of the population that completed the survey belongs to small and large companies. Micro and medium-sized companies follow them.

By answering the question of how many pumps they bought last year, we aimed to determine the volume of purchases in the Slovenian industrial pumps market. We found that most respondents (39.1%) bought between one and five pumps per year. This was followed by a group with more than 15 pumps (30.8%), a group with 6 to 10 pumps (20.3%), and a group with 11 to 15 pumps (27 respondents, i.e., 9.8%).

To test how well they understand how the pumps work, we asked the respondents if they knew the parameters for determining the suitability of the pumps. The possible answers were divided into six clusters. Most respondents, representing 43.6% of the sample, understand how the pumps work well. The second group of respondents falls into neither good nor satisfactory (15.8%), followed by those who believe they know the operation of the pumps very well and poorly (both groups, 14.3%). The

lowest percentage is accounted for by the respondents who believe that they know the pumps satisfactorily; they account for 12.0%. Based on the obtained results of our sample, we can say that the largest share of buyers of industrial pumps is those who are well acquainted with the operation of pumps.

The respondents assessed the importance of decision factors in the selection of pumps. The degree of importance was assessed using the Likert scale: 1. It does not matter. 2. It does not matter. 3. It is neither insignificant nor essential. 4. It is important. 5. It is very important. The quality of materials proved to be the most critical factor in the selection of pumps, as the average importance rating was 4.48 (SD = 0.67). The quality of materials was followed by the price of the pump, with an average rating of 4.14 (SD = 0.95), and the advice given by the salesperson, with an average importance rating of 4.08 (SD = 0.90). The online information is rated as the next factor, with an average rating of 3.82 (SD = 0.95), followed by the brand, with an average rating of 3.34 (SD = 1.01). Among the least important factors when buying industrial pumps is advertising, with an average rating of 2.3 (SD = 1.15). The least important factors are marketing campaigns, with an average rating of 2.44 (SD = 1.25), and the place of purchase, with an average rating of 2.77 (SD = 1.12). Based on the above, it can be concluded that when buying industrial pumps, it is common practice to find the highest quality pumps at an affordable price, with an important role played by the sales consultant, who has the task of explaining the benefits of the pump to the customer.

Buyers of industrial pumps obtain information about pumps from various sources. We, therefore, asked them to rate how

important each source of information about pumps is to them using a Likert scale. Sales personnel at pump suppliers proved to be the essential source of information about pumps, with an average importance rating of 4.10 (SD = 0.84). Important sources of information include the Internet, with an average rating of 3.65 (SD = 0.99), and colleagues and acquaintances, with an average rating of 3.59 (SD = 1.17), followed by promotional materials and catalogs, with an average rating of 3.53 (SD = 1.13). Among the least significant data sources are trade shows, with an average rating of 3.29 (SD = 1.10). At the bottom are specialized magazines with 2.74 (SD = 1.26) since there are no specialized magazines in Slovenian on the Slovenian market that would deal with pumps.

Nearly 64% of respondents said they prefer to buy pumps of a brand they know, and more than 36% prefer the cheapest pumps. As much as 79% of the surveyed industrial pump buyers prefer Slovenian suppliers and only 19% purchase these products through foreign suppliers (the remaining 2% buy them through online stores). These data show us that most Slovenian customers are bound to domestic suppliers because of better communication, the possibility of negotiating the price, and solving possible complaints.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to test all hypotheses. If the explained variability is large enough compared to the unexplained one, we can confirm that what it explains has some effect on the dependent variable under consideration.

Using ANOVA, we tested whether H1 is statistically significant for smaller

customers who buy fewer pumps and that the brand has a more significant influence than the price, campaign, advertising, and advice from the salesperson. Table 1

compares the importance of each factor in selecting a pump with the number of pumps purchased in the previous year.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% conf. interval	
					Low	High
1 - 5 pumps	52	3.63	.950	.132	3.37	3.90
6 - 10 pumps	27	3.33	1.038	.200	2.92	3.74
11 - 15 pumps	13	3.08	1.115	.309	2.40	3.75
More than 15 pumps	41	3.05	.947	.148	2.75	3.35
Total	133	3.34	1.007	.087	3.17	3.51

Source: Research results

Based on Levene's test (Table 2), the p-value is larger than 0.5, which means that the variable is homogeneous. If the variances are homogeneous, there are no

statistically significant differences between the groups, so that we can perform the ANOVA test.

Table 2. Levene's test for homogeneity of brand variance

Levene statistic	df1	df2	Asymp. p-value
0.482	3	129	.695

Source: Research results

As demonstrated by Table 3, the p-value is less than 0.05. It can be argued that there are differences in the brand averages in the groups according to the number of pumps purchased in the previous year. We

also look at the averages in the basic statistics and see that the average is higher in the groups that purchased fewer pumps (3.63 and 3.33). Therefore, hypothesis H1 is accepted.

Table 3. ANOVA brand test

Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Asymp. p-value
8,891	3	2,964	3,061	.031

Source: Research results

The variables in Table 4, with a p-value larger than 0.5 (shaded), are considered homogeneous, and ANOVA is calculated for

them; for the others, the Brown-Forsythe test is calculated and interpreted in the same way as ANOVA.

Table 4. Levene’s test of homogeneity of variance

	Levene’s statistic	df1	df2	Asymp. p-value
References	2.324	3	129	.078
Manufacturers	3.138	3	129	.028
Web fora	0.394	3	129	.758
Sales consultants	1.658	3	129	.179
Professional articles	0.603	3	129	.614
Information from coworkers	3.150	3	129	.027

Source: Research results

Table 5 shows that the two options’ p-value is lower than 0.05, excluding the sales consultants. We cannot say that there are statistically significant differences in the

purchases of a different number of pumps in the past year. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is rejected.

Table 5. ANOVA test

	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Asymp. p-value
References	5.705	3	1.902	1.586	.196
Web fora	21.002	3	7.001	5.707	.001
Sales consultants	5.723	3	1.908	2.307	.080
Professional articles	33.565	3	11.188	8.330	.000

Source: Research results

Table 6 shows that the p-value is not less than 0.05. The differences in the mean

values are not statistically significant.

Table 6. Brown-Forsythe test

	Statistics	df1	df2	Asymp. p-value
Manufacturers	1.412	3	65.186	.247
Coworkers	.290	3	63.439	.832

Source: Research results

For the analysis of H3, variables presented in Table 7 were used. They are

homogeneous, which allows the use of ANOVA.

Table 7. Levene’s homogeneity test for H3 variance

	Levene’s statistic	df1	df2	Asymp. p-value
Brand	.482	3	129	.695
Price	1.339	3	129	.265
Quality of materials	1.868	3	129	.138
Advice from a salesperson	1.352	3	129	.261
The information available on the Internet	1.287	3	129	.282
Place of purchase	.691	3	129	.559
Promotion	2.825	3	129	.051
Advertising	.716	3	129	.544

Source: Research results

As demonstrated by Table 8, the p-value for the three options (colored) is less than 0.05, with no sales consultants among them. Statistically significant differences regarding the assertion within the group’s “purchase of pumps in the past year” exist in the brand, which has already been established

for the first hypothesis (H1), the promotion and advertising. These three options are better assessed by smaller customers, up to 10 purchased pumps, which can be seen in the descriptive statistics table. We reject the hypothesis.

Table 8. ANOVA results

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Asymp. p-value
Brand	8.891	3	2.964	3.061	.031
Price	2.946	3	.982	1.098	.352
Quality of materials	.902	3	.301	.665	.575
Advice from a salesperson	5.083	3	1.694	2.139	.098
The information available on the Internet	1.504	3	.501	.547	.651
Place of purchase	4.431	3	1.477	1.181	.320
Promotion	38.772	3	12.924	10.047	.000
Advertising	23.316	3	7.772	6.655	.000

Source: Research results

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Theoretical contribution

This study found that less than 40 percent of respondents purchase one to five pumps per year, more than 40 percent are well acquainted with the pump operation and parameters to determine the suitability of the pump, and less than 80 percent of respondents purchase pumps from domestic suppliers. The study aimed to identify the key factors influencing the purchase of industrial pumps and assess the importance of branding. To answer our research question and with the help of data, we found that the quality of industrial pumps is one of the most critical factors in purchasing a pump. The importance of factors in the decision to purchase industrial pumps in terms of quality is followed by price and advice from the salesperson. The less critical factors for the purchase decision include the place of purchase, marketing promotions, and advertising.

In the next phase of the research, we wanted to determine the importance of the sources of information about industrial pumps. The main objective is to determine where the customers obtain information at the purchase decision-making stage. The respondents identified the sales personnel of the suppliers of such products as the most important source of information. This information points to the importance of trained and experienced personnel in pump sales. This is followed by information from the Internet, where the supplier must have a clear website and information from colleagues and acquaintances, who also have a lot of information and experience in the field of pumps. Information from catalogs and promotional materials can be considered less critical information sources. The

least important are the sources of information from trade fairs and information from specialized magazines.

Industrial buyers are profoundly uncertain and stressed due to the near-infinite information available through many channels. According to Toman et al. (2007), the best suppliers strongly “align their sales and marketing teams to support the customer journey from start to finish—breaking down the historical barriers between those functions in the process.” When this happens, these companies can develop relevant and consistent tools, guidance, and messaging to facilitate the buying journey, increase revenue, and ultimately increase customer loyalty.

The research confirmed the first hypothesis and thus found that the brand of industrial pumps has a statistically more significant influence on smaller customers than on larger customers. The critical factor in their purchase is the quality of materials. Chang et al. (2021) investigated the theory that brand orientation conditions in B2B relationships and found that relationship commitment is a powerful leverage that transforms the company’s brand orientation into superior relationship performance. Our findings suggest that for smaller buyers of industrial pumps, who buy pumps less frequently, it is not statistically significant that a sales consultant is a more important source of information about pumps than other sources of information. The analysis showed that it could not be confirmed that quality is more critical for larger customers.

5.2. Management implications

Suppose suppliers of industrial pumps want to get as close as possible to their customers. In that case, they need to identify how customers operate, their needs,

and how purchasing decisions are made. Customers can be segmented to some degree by some of their characteristics, but they still differ from each other in unique ways. As in consumer markets, B2B markets have different needs, expectations, and goals influencing their purchasing decisions. Companies need to follow their customers and identify their wants and needs. Therefore, studying customer behavior is one of the keys to the success of any company.

Sebacher (2021) argues that the concept and knowledge discipline of B2B marketing is developing rapidly today; the change process is supposed to be undergoing a paradigm shift. Customers are becoming more demanding and better informed and have a wide range of choices when purchasing on B2B markets, resulting in weaker loyalty. To effectively manage various companies' relationships and interactions with existing and potential customers, companies can choose from various management tools such as ERM, CRM, and others, depending on their specific needs. A company that chooses Customer Relationship Management (CRM) must define its expectations. It is necessary to review and analyze the current situation and identify the areas the company wants to improve by implementing CRM. The CRM strategy will help the company identify customers with more significant potential, attract new customers and retain existing ones, increase the value of their purchases, achieve a high level of new purchases, and build and maintain genuine customer relationships. The company must also be aware that the success of CRM depends on the company's ability to perceive and respond to changing customer needs and requirements.

CRM is already a proven approach and delivers positive results in managing

customers. Still, in recent years there has been a plethora of exciting new developments in B2B marketing. For example, Witell et al. (2020) introduced customer experience management (CEM) in B2B marketing, explaining that interactions in the B2B context are also "experienced," providing the template for designing and managing various touchpoints for a better customer experience. Rodriguez and Svensson (2019) studied complex B2B service relationships and found that they are influenced by time, through the past experiences of the service provider and the service recipient, but also pre-visualized before the implementation of the service (from the future); this means that each interaction between the buyer and the seller "progressively changes the mindset of both from the initial position of each (active consideration of time)." Nenadál et al. (2021) introduced a new term - complex customer loyalty- and developed a measurement tool to assess this concept, considering the behavioral and emotional loyalty dimensions. Findings from Prior et al.'s (2019) study show that actor-based antecedents shape customer participation with normative and prescriptive controls through "*interpersonal dynamics between actors moderating these relationships.*" Combining the results of our study with the highlighted directions of current research, we can see that B2B sales are ahead of tectonic shifts. Therefore, this area still offers much room and opportunity for further research.

5.3. Research limitations

There are some limitations to this study. The results may reflect industry-specific factors that could be different in other industrial markets. The studied products are not very expensive compared to other categories of B2B products. The market studied has characteristics of a mature market,

and only a minimal growth rate is observed. However, these limitations do not diminish the importance of the research results and provide important information not only for researchers but also for B2B professionals.

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INDUSTRIJSKI ODNOSI: BRENDIRANJE I KUPOVNE ODLUKE NA TRŽIŠTU PUMPI

Sažetak

U ovom se radu raspravlja o kupovnom ponašanju na tržištu industrijskih pumpi. Uzevši u obzir povećanje globalne konkurencije između dobavljača, dizajniranje i korištenje strategija, usmjerenih prema kupcima, postaje nužno za uspjeh na tržištu. Empirijska analiza se temelji na podacima ankete, provedene na uzorku od 133 industrijska kupca pumpi. Analizira se značaj čimbenika nabave, ključnih za uspješnost procesa prodaje. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da brend industrijske pumpe ima statistički

veći utjecaj na manje, negoli na veće kupce. Ova studija doprinosi postojećoj literaturi o odlučivanju u kupovini i industrijskom brendiranju. Na kraju rada, razmatraju se širi potencijal za primjenu rezultata istraživanja kao i smjernice za buduća istraživanja te ograničenja postojeće studije.

Ključne riječi: ponašanje kupaca, industrijske pumpe, industrijsko brendiranje, B2B tržište, kupovne odluke, percepcije