

# PURCHASE MARKETING IN THE INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRIAL MARKET: CASE STUDIES OF CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES

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## Introduction

The market of enterprises is characterised by a specific structure of the parties, a variety and the type and structures of the products to be offered. The customers are mainly other enterprises, organisations or institutions. A small group comprises individual consumers who purchasing goods and services occasionally buy the means of production having a dual application. The scale and structure of the turnover in the market of the means of production is defined by industrial and construction companies, food producers, and to a minor extent by such budget units as the army, fire brigade, cultural establishments, health service, state and local authorities, as well as schools (Wojciechowski, 1995).

In the market of enterprises the demand is technically determined (e.g. material standards, strictly defined parameters). It is also connected with results in relation to the consumer goods market. It changes under the influence of it, but usually less slowly and deeply (Mruk et al., 2007). These features translate into the lack of price flexibility. The changes of the prices, regardless of the reasons, will not affect the changes of the demand for sourcing products.

The industrial market is a geographically concentrated market. The industry located in several areas attracts others. It allows for reducing the costs of sales and it encourages cooperation. The sellers should constantly observe the regional and trans-regional – international displacement of various industrial sectors (Kotler, Keller, 2012).

Many factors affect enterprises while making a decision about purchases. The variety, pace and scale of

the changes in the industrial market cause that in some situations economic factors become priorities, in other situations cultural or subjective factors – personal ones matter the most. The offers of the suppliers being similar deprive the purchaser of the rational basis for selection. The economic factors become leading factors when the difference between the products is significant and the purchaser makes a judgement and a choice in a rational way (Kotler et al., 1999).

P. Kotler and S. Levy suggested spreading marketing to the sphere of purchases (Kotler et al., 1999). According to T. Wojciechowski (2007) the purchasing marketing is a well thought-out set of decisions and activities of a production enterprise resulting from the function of supplying with production goods (or goods in trade). It allows for making the purchases (or signing delivery-order contracts) of the whole range of the goods and services which have best parameters when it comes to quality, price and delivery times thanks to the diagnosis of the sources made by the buyer. The purchasing marketing allows for optimizing the supply management, creating active relations with the suppliers and co-shaping the processes in the market of supplier.

## Aim of the paper

In the article there is an exemplification of the categories of the purchasing marketing in the light of creating relationships and the international market factors. Polish construction companies acting in the international market have become the subject of the relations.



The aim of the analysis is to identify the factors affecting the choice of purchase strategies in the international market. An assessment of two marketing competences has been made, which were necessary in the foreign market – customer relation management, as well as channel distribution marketing management. The types of organisational innovations within the relations were the second area of the research.

## Research methodology

The results presented here are a part of a bigger project whose aim was to identify and make and assessment of external and internal determinants affecting the internationalisation of Polish construction companies<sup>1</sup>. The quantitative verification has been conducted on the basis of electronic questionnaire survey. The sampling conducted here is a purposive sampling of medium-sized and large enterprises involved in construction works and building material manufacturers among the enterprises in Poland. One of the purposive sampling criteria, apart from the employment size and the position in the market, was doing business abroad. The sampling structure included specific characteristics of the construction sector excluding the numerous and less stable segment of the micro and small businesses connected with carrying out construction works. The analysis of the sector also included the identification of the businesses whose establishment, from the very beginning, was connected with doing business in the foreign market as a target market. In the purposive sampling of the chosen companies the researcher took into consideration the following criteria: at least a few years of experience in the construction sector, medium and high potential of knowledge and technical equipment, as well as specialization in different types of construction works (housing and industrial buildings, general construction, sanitary engineering, specialised construction works) and manufacturing of building materials. The respondents were selected among the senior managers: managing director, persons managing various departments in various foreign markets, chief executive officers, general managers, board members and other managing persons responsible for the activity of the companies abroad. The research was conducted within the entire territory of Poland, on the sample of 150 businesses.

## Strategy of purchases in the international market

The purchase strategy in the international market formulated at the level of the company or its strategic units results from the development strategy accepted in the particular foreign markets and the geographical diversification of the purchases. The company can take into consideration the following strategies (Gołębiowski, 2001):

- internal growth strategy in the home purchase market,
- internal growth strategy in the foreign purchase market which means establishing a new manufacturing or trading company for supplying,
- external growth strategy in the home market which means gaining new assets by creating a common enterprise with a home or foreign partner to provide the home company with goods,
- external growth strategy in the foreign purchase market which means gaining new assets through an acquisition, a merge or a participation in creating an enterprise for purchasing purposes.

The development of a company in the international market can be conducted through backward vertical integration (diversification) – the company takes over the previous phases in the process of creating the value through playing the role of a foreign supplier (Witek-Hajduk, 2011).

The geographical configuration of the buying activities includes determining the spatial locations of the units, localisation and delocalisation, as well as the number of the countries where the purchases are conducted. There are two variants (Stonehouse et al., 2000):

- geographical purchasing concentration – purchasing is concentrated in few markets chosen due to such benefits as access to production resources, lower costs, geographical nearness, etc.,
- geographical purchase diversification – purchasing is conducted in many spread markets.

The vital role is played by the selection of the foreign markets on the basis of subject and object conditions allowing for the assessment of the attractiveness of the potential risk.

Strategic sourcing (contacts with the customers) results from the strategy accepted by the enterprise, which defines the character of the connections with the business partners, as well as their positions in the supply chain. The ways of decision making, the choice of determinants can be defined when the role of purchasing is defined and the basic rules of purchasing marketing of the enterprise are known (Gołębiowski, 2003). To conduct a purchase in the international market the enterprise must make decisions about purchasing (the procedures of choosing suppliers, the criteria of choice, assessment and categories of suppliers, their number, as well as the types of the relations with the native and foreign suppliers) and about agreements (the ways of entering into contracts, the rules of formulation of the requirements of a contract with the foreign partners, including basic and additional provisions, the rules of the contract settlement) (Witek-Hajduk, 2011).

Defining the orientation of the company in the sphere of procurement should be a starting point in an organisational buying behaviour research. There are three basic buying concepts:

- transaction orientation,

- procurement orientation,
- supply management orientation.

The first orientation is strictly connected with exchange transactions, repeated transactions and long-term connections characterised by the antagonistic approach of both parties and a short period of action to be considered. The aim of the buyer using such a purchasing concept is to make the best transaction in respect of price, quality, supplier-based availability, as well as maximizing the advantage over the supplier and avoiding risk. Using the second concept the enterprise aims at increasing its effectiveness in terms of quality, cost reduction and cooperation with its suppliers. This orientation is a basic element of total quality management – TQM (Świątowiec, 2006). Supply management requires the modification of the assessment process after gaining a contract. It must include the measurement of real achievements, and not only of potential possibilities. Buyers making an assessment of the decisions made in the past choose future suppliers and use their knowledge as a negotiation tool in order to gain a better bargaining position. Both the concrete method and the scope of the classification system show a variability depending on a business line and an organisation.

### ***Factors stimulating the development of relations in the international market***

**P**rogressive globalisation requires the change of the marketing orientation towards international marketing – ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric and geocentric. The process of internationalisation can concern activities connected with gaining new customers and markets, as well as searching for and optimizing resources (Welch, Loustarian, 1993). The enterprise creates relations with the different types of foreign businesses, and its market and financial results depend on the effectiveness of the relations and the results of the cooperation.

The relations are long-term bonds based on partnership which are beyond ordinary market transactions. Such transactions are, first and foremost, connected with a long-term cooperation, the process of constant development and repeated interaction between the parties (Witek-Hajduk, 2011). The type of bonds and the way of their maintenance are, both formally and informally, determined by the business line. Both types have an impact on the level of confidence between the partners (Szczepeński, 2012).

Relations may have an organised form with time, from singular links to networks. The changes taking place in each market are the response to the needs of buyers. Customers are those who shape the flows in the markets through their expectations related to services and products. A network organisation can be defined as a relatively steady connection of autonomous and specialised business units and enterprises taking part

in the achievement of a common goal (Brzeziński, 2002). Creating a network of connections between enterprises is favourable for logistics concepts. The sector of logistics services is one of the fastest growing sector. The actors of the product marketing channels are (Urbaniak, 1999):

- manufacturer of goods and services,
- representatives of the manufacturer,
- product marketing managers,
- distributors of the manufacturer,
- wholesaler,
- agents and brokers,
- industrial buyers.

The essence of the network organisational structure results from the way it was formed, as well as the benefits and experience of the participants. It concerns the interaction, confidence and loyalty of the enterprises based on a common goal. A close, voluntary and conscious cooperation improves competitiveness and develops a wide range of organisational skills, allows for the fast implementation of innovations and the flow of information with the use of computer networks (Wiatrak, 2003).

In the relationship marketing a great role is played by direct selling of regional sales representatives, product marketing managers or the particular business line. The nearness of the sourcing is essential for agents, brokers and wholesalers offering products to smaller industrial buyers. The retail outlets play a marginal role in the marketing channels, although such forms as hypermarkets are to ensure a greater competitiveness and to be the response not only to private customers' expectations, but also micro and small enterprises.

Choosing a distribution channel in the previous and new market an enterprise takes into account such factors as experience in the different market segments, the distribution channels of the competition, the costs of the alternative distribution and its effectiveness, the amount of the products available for sale, the technological complexity of products, the provision of additional services at an adequate level, the reputation of the broker, the effectiveness of the previous sale, the requirements of the buyers of capital goods, the requirements of the today's infrastructure (Wojciechowski, 1995).

The marketing functions combine with logistics functions. Logistics concerns planning and management of the activities necessary for delivering the materials and services to the manufacturer and the finished goods to the potential customers in an adequate amount and desired condition (Hutt, Speh, 1995).

Among the basic factors which may influence the development of connections one can distinguish (Ciesielski, 2005):

- growth of the market variety – a bigger number of segments and the growth of the meaning of individual needs,
- growing competitiveness of the level and quality of services and consumer service,



- tendency to trade concentration, the formation and development of new distribution channels,
- shortening product life cycles,
- integration of economic and decision-making processes,
- growth of businesses and innovations,
- growth of the meaning of ecological aspects,
- outsourcing and looking for new organisational solutions.

Apart from the factors mentioned above we can also enumerate detailed determinants which played a vital role in the growing interest in logistics connections:

- growth of the average product,
- growth of the number of transportation operations per unit product as the result of the decline of production within one manufacturing plant,
- growth of the distance covered by the unit load,
- decline of the average size of consignments as a result of the maintenance of the minimal level of stock thanks to prompt deliveries,
- decline of transportation costs in comparison with other logistics services, which is the result of new organizational techniques in transportation, the liberalization of the law and an aspiration for achieving the economies of scale.

The business partners interconnections related to the market dependence, i.e. customer – supplier relations, external competitive pressures coming from companies willing to become a part of the network cause the reduction of the prices of the services and products offered by the partners. Such solutions encourage the reduction of overall costs and the growth of the profitability of the network organization. The partnership of a network organisation is based on mutual trust, common ideology and reputation (Mikuła, Pietruszka-Ortyl, 2006).

A network can be formed by several or a great number of enterprises differing in size, growth model, organisation, the degree of internal competition and management structure which usually enter into cooperation agreements. In consequence the mechanism of intra-organisational network is based on numerous attributes (Łobos, 2000):

- decisions about the resources do not only result from the assessment of the parent company, but they are also the effect of the collective needs;
- flow of the resources between the business partners is repeatable in nature, not short-term;
- there is a good flow of information between the coalition members;
- coordination of the activities between the business partners is based on negotiations and agreements, and not on competing;
- each organisation as a part of a network performs groups of tasks which are a part of a whole traditionally done by one organisation;
- planning and control are reduced to a minimum;
- there is a flexibility within the domain – the recon-

figuration of the system can take place without unnecessary organisational limits.

The global trends having an influence on the network connections include international exchange resulting in a rapid growth of global trade, the geographic expansion of economy and the growing complexity of international economic connections. The process of international trade liberalisation is a result of the activity of such organisations as WTO, APEC, the European Union and NAFTA. The structural changes in the economy have led to the growth of service and business lines based on knowledge and advanced technologies at the price of the sector of material-consuming products. Transition from the producer market to the consumer market is typical for the post-industrial society model characterised by a higher level of expenses and the growing demand for the products and services adjusted to individual needs which resulted in the growth of structure of turnovers in the institutional market. The company strategies are increasingly influenced by the expectations of the growth of the value created for shareholders, and consequently a constant search for savings and a bigger effectiveness by the rationalization of the production process and concentration on the basic activity and the outsourcing of additional functions. The processes of the deregulation and liberalisation of the international market cause, on the one hand, the growth of competitiveness, but on the other hand reduction of prices and the growth of the demand for transportation services. New information and communication technologies enable integrated financial management, as well as the management of information and the flow of goods allowing for the implementation of new solutions in the production and distribution system (Nowe horyzonty, 2007). Many of these represent a high level of flexibility. They are occasionally created for singular activities.

### **Relational competence of construction companies in the international market**

**A**mong the marketing competences which must be possessed by construction companies in the foreign market one can distinguish:

- relationship management,
- organisation and management of distribution channels.

The influence of the marketing factors deciding about foreign expansion makes the enterprises work actively on marketing activities. It has been proved by the figures presented in Table 1, which have been at the two highest levels in all research area.

The relations with the customers in the construction market can vary which results mostly from the complex cooperation agreements and the ways of implementing construction projects. The trade contracts of the industrial market are characterized by a great value, steadiness, repeatability and organisational and

Table 1. Level of relation capabilities of Polish construction enterprises in the international market

Level of marketing capabilities		EU countries – 15	EU countries – 12	EU countries in total	Other Western European countries	Other Eastern European countries	Other countries of Western and Eastern Europe	Other countries worldwide
<b>Management of relationships with customers</b>	IN TOTAL	104	95	140	27	61	70	25
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	1 – definitely unnecessary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2 – Rather unnecessary	4.8	3.6	2.1	3.7	7.1	6.6	0
	3 – Neither necessary nor unnecessary	12.5	10.0	8.4	7.4	8.6	9.8	12.0
	4 – Rather necessary	36.5	42.1	45.3	33.3	42.9	45.9	36.0
	5 – Definitely necessary	39.4	39.3	42.1	51.9	37.1	34.4	52.0
	Difficult to say	6.7	5.0	2.1	3.7	4.3	3.3	0
<b>Reaching customers (distribution channels)</b>	1 – Definitely unnecessary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2 – Rather unnecessary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	3 – Neither necessary nor unnecessary	6.7	5.0	2.1	3.7	7.1	6.6	0
	4 – Rather necessary	28.8	35.0	36.8	22.2	37.1	37.7	36.0
	5 – Definitely necessary	62.5	58.6	60.0	70.4	52.9	52.5	64.0
	Difficult to say	1.9	1.4	1.1	3.7	2.9	3.3	0

Source: own elaboration

technological connections, often followed by the long-term and comprehensive assessment of the business partner. It decides about a professional approach to winning a customer and maintaining the relationship (Sławińska, Urbanowska-Sojkin, 1995). Relationship management appears to be essential in all foreign markets where the construction companies were present (the total number of the two highest assessments – necessary and very necessary was about 80%). A rel-

atively lower assessment of 76% concerned the market of the most developed EU countries, and the highest assessment – 88% concerned other markets worldwide. Although the diversity was not significant, it can be thought that it resulted from the better knowledge of the European market, fixed marketing standards and the effect of experience. Gaining and maintaining contacts outside Europe required bigger engagement and activeness of the enterprises.



Table 2. Types of organisational innovations implemented abroad by Polish construction companies in the years 2000-2015

Types of innovations	Period of changes						
	2000-2005		2006-2010		Dynamics	2011-2015	
In total	N	%	N	%	2000-2005/ 2006-2010	N	%
	150	100.0%	150	100.0%		150	100.0%
No answer	26	17.3%	9	6.0%		86	57.3%
New after sales services (warranty, servicing, installations, etc.)	36	24.0%	45	30.0%	+25.0	12	8.0%
New distribution channels	47	31.3%	65	43.3%	+38.3	17	11.3%
Gaining access to new sourcing	41	27.3%	65	43.3%	+58.5	25	16.7%
Change of a organisational structure	49	32.7%	64	42.7%	+30.6	24	16.0%
Establishing subsidiaries / departments abroad	36	24.0%	43	28.7%	+19.4	10	6.7%
Passing a function to another enterprise (outsourcing)	21	14.0%	32	21.3%	+52.4	8	5.3%
Implementation of quality management system	64	42.7%	48	32.0%	-25.0	13	8.7%
Implementation of an advanced information system supporting management (e.g. CRM)	34	22.7%	41	27.3%	+20.6	12	8.0%
Implementation of the system of enterprise resource planning (e.g. materials, the course of works)	37	24.7%	45	30.0%	+21.6	12	8.0%
Implementation of the results measurement system (e.g. BSC)	35	23.3%	36	24.0%	+2.9	12	8.0%
Entering into strategic alliance (implementation of an enterprise with a partner)	30	20.0%	33	22.0%	+10.0	11	7.3%
Merger or acquisition of another enterprise	15	10.0%	20	13.3%	+33.3	6	4.0%
Finding a native strategic investor	14	9.3%	23	15.3%	+64.3	6	4.0%
Finding a foreign strategic investor	13	8.7%	25	16.7%	+92.3	4	2.7%
Others	4	2.7%	2	1.3%	-	1	0.7%
Do not know	5	3.3%	6	4.0%	-	5	3.3%

\*figures do not add up to 100% due to the possibility of a multiple choice variant

Source: own elaboration



In the business market there is a specific structure of distribution channels. The Logistics system is dependent on the buyer. The buyer decides on the size of the purchase, and the time and place of delivery. The buyer purchases a product having the previously set technical parameters. It means a bigger influence on the distribution channels to be used to deliver it, as well as the choice of the means of transport. Construction services are a special case because the process takes place in the location chosen by the investor. Enterprises use such logistics systems which correspond with specific features of the subjects of transaction, a relatively smaller number of buyers and a significant amount of the products sold. They use long-term contracts, and deliveries can be made just in time, and business entities appearing in the logistics chain often play a double role of manufacturers and buyers. Creating distribution channels (reaching customer) was evaluated in more than 90% of cases as necessary and definitely necessary, the highest evaluation of the five-degree scale was dominant. It constituted 60% of the total in the EU market, 53% outside the Union in Europe and in the remaining countries of the world it reached 64%.

### ***Types of innovations implemented by construction companies in the international market - part of innovation in purchases***

The figures presented in Table 2 concerned the whole sample of 150 business entities and the whole research period, but the forecast related to the years 2011–2015 was limited to 64 respondents – others did not answer the question indicating some difficulties with the prediction of future activities conducted abroad. The product innovations had the biggest scope – implementation of new or modified products/services was declared from 2000 to 2010 by more than a half of the enterprises. It should be noticed that in all categories of this group there was a declining tendency, specially dynamic in case of patented inventions.

There was a rise in the share of the companies which implemented new production processes (36.7%) or modernized old ones (40.7%) since 2006. However, as in case of products, there was a significant decline in patented technologies (indicator of dynamics-34.4%). Relatively big activity took place in the group of the market innovation, in all the categories there was a rise in the dynamics of changes – especially in case of creating new distribution channels and gaining access to new sourcing (in both cases +43.3%). In the group of organisational innovations the highest dynamics concerned the changes of organisational structures (+30.6%), these activities concerned the biggest number of enterprises – 32.7% up to 2005 and 42.7% up to 2010. Besides there was a rise in the dynamics of outsourcing (+52.4%), mergers and acquisitions (+33.3%), gaining domestic strategic investors (+64.3%) and

foreign strategic investors (+92.3%). The last three categories concerned the group having a share in the research sample of about fifteen per cent.

The significantly lower evaluation indicators of the scope of enterprise innovations concerned the period up to 2015 what can be explained by planning difficulties. Many of the actions taken were initiated by external changes and requirements generated in the international environment. The intensity of the processes, their unpredictability and diversity reflect the scale of dangers which the participants of the construction sector had to face up expanding the market. It indicates the necessity of a great flexibility in planning and readiness to modify operational and strategic plans. The research has proved that the enterprises were able to withstand the international competition and successfully implemented the projects in the European market and – to a minor extent – in the global market.

### ***Conclusions***

An inherent feature of the today's internationalization of social, economic, political and cultural life is the intensification of competition processes which occur in every business line. Striving for increasing competitiveness has become an imperative for the enterprises acting in the global market where there is a competition between the business tycoons of the countries and sectors. Innovations in all the areas of an organisation have become a basic competition plan. Creating relations and strengthening the resources by searching for beneficial sourcing in the foreign markets can be of significant importance.

Relationship marketing appeared to be equally important in all the markets outside Poland where the construction companies were present (the total sum of the highest assessments was about 80% of all responses). There is a specific structure of the distribution channels in the business market. The logistics system of the construction sector is dependent on the buyer – investor. Enterprises use such sourcing systems which correspond with the features of the transaction subjects and the technical and organisational requirements of the construction process.

Entering into foreign markets required the intensification of the innovative activities in the implemented processes (technologies), marketing and organisational activities. According to the respondents the international market was more demanding than the domestic market. The changes made within the new distribution channels, as well as gaining access to new sourcing were significant when it comes to the area of market innovations. When it comes to the organisational innovations the dynamics concerned the transformations of the organisational structures. What is more, the dynamics of such activities as outsourcing, merging or making acquisitions, gaining new native strategic investors and especially foreign strategic investors increased.

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## Endnote

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## Marketing zakupów na międzynarodowym rynku przemysłowym. Przypadek przedsiębiorstw budowlanych

### Streszczenie

W artykule dokonano analizy i oceny czynników determinujących strategię marketingu zakupów z uwzględnieniem szans, jakie wynikają dla przedsiębiorstw budowlanych z rozwoju rynku poprzez wykorzystanie rynków za granicą. Zamieszczono wyniki badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego na próbie 150 polskich przedsiębiorstw budowlanych w zakresie tworzenia relacji oraz zarządzania kanałami dystrybucji na rynku międzynarodowym. Drugim obszarem egzemplifikacji były rodzaje innowacji organizacyjnych w obszarze tworzonych relacji. Badanie wykazało wzrost udziału firm, które wdrożyły nowe lub zmodernizowały produkty i procesy produkcyjne. Stosunkowo duża aktywność miała miejsce w grupie innowacji rynkowych, we wszystkich badanych kategoriach wystąpił wzrost dynamiki zmian – szczególnie w przypadku budowania nowych kanałów dystrybucji i pozyskiwania dostępu do nowych źródeł zaopatrzenia. W grupie innowacji organizacyjnych największa dynamika dotyczyła zmian struktur organizacyjnych. Zintensyfikowano takich działania, jak outsourcing, dokonywanie fuzji lub przejęć, pozyskiwanie krajowych inwestorów strategicznych, a przede wszystkim pozyskiwanie zagranicznych inwestorów strategicznych.

### Słowa kluczowe

przedsiębiorstwa budowlane, międzynarodowy rynek zakupów