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BRAND EQUITY AS A DETERMINANT OF CUSTOMER COOPERATION GROWTH IN THE ROAD FREIGHT TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

Summary. This article presents the results of a survey that was carried out among companies commissioning cargo handling on the national transport services market. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between brand awareness, image and brand equity in terms of companies specializing in road freight transport. The relations between brand equity and the process of handling transport orders were also evaluated. Specific hypotheses about significant dependencies between the parameters referred to above were formulated and were then verified by performing a quantitative data analysis, relying on Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and the chi-square test of independence. A statistically significant correlation between brand image and equity, on the one hand, and between brand awareness and image, on the other, has been identified based on the survey. The research confirms the importance of brand equity in the development of business operations, mainly due to the existence of significant and statistically important dependencies between brand equity and customer cooperation-related parameters that have been observed in the three types of relationships under analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

When analysing the decisions and activities of companies specializing in road freight transport, one may notice that they seek, to an ever-greater degree, to achieve and then maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. This group of companies often comprises highly innovative undertakings that specialize in contract services and offer their customers solutions that are tailored to their individual needs. It seems that competing service providers have become increasingly aware of the impact that their marketing activities exert on their customers' perception of the value of their market offering. As proved by other studies, customers, in turn, prefer cooperation with companies enjoying a good reputation and a positive image [1, p. 1080].

Being aware of the above, transport companies ever more frequently act to pro-actively develop their brands, especially in the context of building their value, measured by means of brand equity [2, pp. 96-97]. It is worth noting that brand equity determines the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing activities. It also plays an important role in building the trust of customers that, according to research conducted by Lassar, Mittal and Sharma [3, pp. 13-14], translates into higher loyalty levels and into readiness to accept higher prices. Customers who are attached to a given brand are also more inclined to provide recommendations. According to research, it is the knowledge that customers have about a given brand that is the main source of that brand's equity. Such knowledge, in turn, is a combination of the brand's awareness and image in the eyes of customers, therefore impacting their purchasing decision and choices [4, p. 430].

Previous studies have identified the potential benefits of brand equity for both goods- and service-dominant brands, although the main focus of attention has been placed on the B2C sector than to the

B2B sector [5, p. 1; 6, p. 324]. However, many scholars have pointed out that there is an urgent need to emphasize the effects of brand equity in the B2B context [6, p. 324; 7, p. 79; 8, p. 17]. In our opinion, these include the impact of brand equity on customer cooperation in the road freight transport industry, which have been relatively neglected in earlier empirical studies.

On the basis of the above-mentioned factors, it seems reasonable to look for relations between brand awareness, image and equity with reference to road freight transport companies. A strong transport brand, due to the high similarity of offers available on the domestic market, increases bargaining power in negotiations with intermediaries as well as shippers and recipients of cargo. This study also attempts to determine the relationship between brand equity and various elements of transport-related activities with reference to customer cooperation. As a result, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H1. There is a positive correlation between brand awareness and equity,
- H2. There is a positive correlation between brand image and equity,
- H3. There is a positive correlation between brand awareness and image,
- H4. There is a positive correlation between brand equity and duration of cooperation,
- H5. There is a positive correlation between brand equity and scope of cooperation and
- H6. There is a negative correlation between brand equity and the number of cooperating carriers.

This article aims to empirically verify these correlations.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Numerous definitions of the term “brand” may be found in the literature. Keller [9, p. 64] refers to a definition formulated by the American Marketing Association (AMA), according to which it is the primary objective of a brand to identify goods and services and to distinguish those from goods and services offered by competitors. In the ISO 10668:2010 standard, a brand is defined as a marketing-related intangible asset that may include names, terms, signs, symbols and logos, as well as graphic designs or combinations thereof, aiming to identify goods, services or units, or to create characteristic images and associations among the stakeholders, thus generating specific economic advantages [10, p. 710]. A similar, although more synthetic, definition is presented by Kotler [11], according to whom a brand constitutes a promise to receive specific values in connection with purchasing a given product. Therefore, the brand should serve as a basis for building attractiveness of the market offering and for developing the tools required to compete on the market.

Currently, a brand is considered to be a permanent and multi-dimensional asset of a company that is responsible not only for how a given company is perceived on the market but also, or mainly, for whether the offering promoted by the brand in question is winning recognition among its recipients. For customers, a brand is a guarantee of the expected quality and efficiency of the services provided and increases the level of their awareness about the usefulness of a specific offering [12, pp. 19-23]. For an enterprise, a brand is a tool used for building customer loyalty as well as for securing sales and profit [13, pp. 1-2; 14, pp. 14-19].

In the theory of marketing, the concept of brand equity ranks prominently among the various approaches to the notion of a brand. This is related to the perception of a brand in the context of its value, which is of great significance for the process of securing a competitive advantage of an enterprise, and of strengthening its market position. Aaker conceives brand equity as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” [15, pp. 8-9]. In line with another approach, brand equity is defined as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand”, meaning that the knowledge about a given brand determines, through its impact on customer behaviours, the build-up of brand equity [16, pp. 74-76].

Transport service providers are regarded mainly through numerous companies in competition to provide quite similar services to the same kinds of customers. In such circumstances, the company must find a way to differentiate itself and the service from the others [17, p. 224]. A way of achieving this can be by creating and developing strong brand equity.

Brand awareness is the primary source of brand equity. It is defined as the ability of a potential buyer to recognize the brand or to remember that it belongs to a specific category of products [18, p. 61]. Brand awareness is the effect of communication-related activities aiming to increase the number of contacts that buyers have with the brand's ads and to increase the number of situations in which the buyers experience the brand, with the above depending on the number of contacts with the brand while using its products [19, 16]. In practice, brand awareness is an indicator describing the effectiveness of the marketing activities of each company. There are numerous examples of scenarios in which transport service providers were effectively positioning their brands, differentiating their offering from similar brands present on a given market. The key elements required to build brand awareness include the following: visual and verbal identification, the related forms of promoting the brand and the system of behaviours of the brand's employees and representatives [20, p. 60; 21, p. 96]. It is worth adding that a deeply remembered brand positively impacts the choice of the supplier of the expected services. This is of great importance on the market of transport services on which thousands of companies operate and where competition is fierce. It is also obvious that each transport division must solve problems of optimizing its functioning, for example, [28, pp. 185-190], which has a positive impact on the existing brand.

Brand image constitutes another source of brand equity. It is considered, along with brand awareness, to be a component of knowledge about a brand, i.e. of what the customers think about it. Brand image should be understood as existing impressions about a brand, related to associations that customers have in their memory, which may trigger their positive or negative approach to the company and to its offering. Brand image is created by a set of features that are unique and peculiar for a given brand and that differentiate the brand, therefore ensuring the desired market recognition. In practice, brand image is based on associations related to purchasing- or use-related situations, user type, product features, functional benefits, advantages related to experience with using the brand, symbolic advantages and brand personality [19, p. 19]. By analysing the aforementioned elements, buyers may evaluate a brand and, therefore, make a purchasing decision [22, p. 195].

The studies conducted by Curina *et al.* [23, p. 5] are worth highlighting in this context, as they indicate that brands from the transport sector do not enjoy good market reputation often, which, in turn, leads to negative consequences in the form of negative opinions about transportation services being circulated by dissatisfied customers.

3. RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHODS

A modified version of the methodology presented in the studies of Davis, Golicic and Marquardt [24, pp. 205-208] as well as Świtłała *et al.* [2, pp. 103-109], based on Keller's brand equity concept, has been used in this research. The survey was conducted with a purpose-selected sample of enterprises representing the opinions of customers of the road freight transport industry. The respondents filled out the questionnaires online. Only those survey participants who provided positive answers in terms of contract-based cooperation and their use of road freight transport services (66 cases) qualified for analysis. Data obtained in this manner were analyzed using the SPSS package.

The surveyed sample comprised service recipients conducting various types of business activities. The group predominantly included production and commercial companies, accounting for 44% and 36% of the surveyed respondents, respectively. A mixed operational profile was reported by nearly 17% of the respondents and a service-based profile was reported by as little as 3% of the surveyed respondents. Over 40% of the respondents reported an international geographical footprint, with 24% of them reporting global reach. In the remaining cases, business activity was limited to the domestic market (34.8%), with nearly 4% of the respondents focusing on the regional market. 50% of the survey participants were employed by large enterprises. SMEs (with micro businesses excluded) were represented by the other half of the surveyed respondents. Companies with domestic capital dominated in the survey (52%). Foreign origin of their capital was declared by 40% of the surveyed respondents, with mixed capital indicated by less than 8% of the respondents. The different characteristics of the surveyed sample are presented in Table 1.

A questionnaire that included 21 closed questions divided into 5 thematic blocks was used to collect the primary data. The first part of the survey included demographics (4) and filtering (2) questions in the form of nominal scales. The other part comprised 3 scales that related to cooperation in the field of road freight transport. These scales were nominal and 7-degree ordering scales. The third group included three scales related to brand awareness [A]. The next section contained 5 scales aimed at evaluating brand image [I] and was based on a relatively wide range of factors reflecting the manner in which brands are perceived by customers. The last part of the questionnaire included 4 scales to measure brand equity [E] that referred, definition-wise, to the brand equity attributes defined by Aaker [18, p. 27]. In this case, both loyalty toward the brand, manifested by readiness to accept higher prices and to continue cooperation, and the strength of the brand in the context of building competitive advantage and ensuring differentiation against competitive brands were taken into consideration.

Table 1

Characteristics

No.	Description	Frequency	%
1.	Operating profile		
1.1.	Production	29	43.9
1.2.	Commerce	24	36.4
1.3.	Services	2	3.0
1.4.	Mixed	11	16.7
2.	Geographical footprint		
2.1.	Regional	2	3.0
2.2.	National	21	31.8
2.3.	International	27	40.9
2.4.	Global	16	24.2
3.	Headcount		
3.1.	10-49 employees	16	24.2
3.2.	50-100 employees	6	9.1
3.3.	101-249 employees	11	16.7
3.4.	Over 250 employees	33	50.0
4.	Origin of capital		
4.1.	Domestic	34	52.3
4.2.	Foreign	26	40.0
4.3.	Mixed	5	7.7

Questions from the last three parts were in the form of 7-degree ordering scales, where 1 indicated “I fully disagree” and 7 indicated “I fully agree”. Based on the values of the aforementioned scales, three aggregating variables (complex scales) were created as follows:

$$A = \frac{1}{3} \sum_{j=1}^3 S_j \quad I = \frac{1}{5} \sum_{j=1}^5 S_j \quad E = \frac{1}{4} \sum_{j=1}^4 S_j$$

The variables compiled in this manner served as a point of departure for a more in-depth statistical analysis in which descriptive statistical measures were relied upon, including the mean, trimmed mean and standard deviation. To identify the correlations, the distribution of the new variables needed to be verified. The Shapiro–Wilk distribution normality test showed that the E variable (describing brand equity) has a normal distribution, with a *p-value* of 0.326. A and I variables, in turn, describing brand awareness and image, show a strong, left-sided bias and do not show a normal distribution in the test applied (in both cases, $p=0.000$). Hence, the Spearman rank correlation factor is the correct measurement instrument. To estimate the relation to the nominal variable (type of cooperation), the chi-square test of independence was used. It was assumed that the result is statistically significant for $p < 0.05$.

To assess the reliability of the complex scales, the Cronbach internal consistency alpha factor was used, assuming that satisfactory results are achieved if its value exceeds 0.60, and that good results are

achieved when its value exceeds 0.70 [25, p. 35]. As indicated by data in Table 2, all scales achieved high values, varying between 0.728 and 0.851. These values prove that the scales show a high level of internal consistency.

Table 2

Reliability statistics pertaining to the scales used

No.	Complex scale with sub-scales	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
1.	Brand awareness [A]: - name well known in the sector [A1], - perceived as a strong partner on the TSL market [A2], - leading brand on the TSL market [A3].	3	0.851
2.	Brand image [I]: - takes care of customer relations [I1], - guarantees good service [I2], - offers high-quality service compared to competitors [I3], - has a good reputation in the sector [I4], - boasts a rich history [I5].	5	0.817
3.	Brand equity [E]: - readiness to accept higher prices [E1], - brand differs from other brands [E2], - brand offers advantages over other brands [E3], - involves customers in maintaining cooperation [E4].	4	0.728

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SURVEY'S RESULTS

4.1. General assessment of brand awareness, image and equity

Tab. 3 presents the results pertaining to brand awareness, image and equity. Differences between the individual scores are significant: from 4.17 in the case of brand equity, to 5.48 in the case of brand awareness. After 5% of most extreme cases are eliminated, the means of all scales turn out to be close to the standard mean, which indicates lack of significant outliers. Standard deflection values also indicate a low level of differentiation between the measurement results obtained.

Table 3

Statistical description of the variables considered

No.	Type of variable	Mean	Standard deflection	5% trimmed mean
1.	Brand awareness [A]	5.48	0.15	5.56
2.	Brand image [I]	5.04	0.11	5.11
3.	Brand equity [E]	4.17	0.14	4.17

According to the data shown, the most positive opinions were provided by the respondents in connection with brand awareness [A]. On analysis of the results, one may notice that in the case of this variable, the mean equaled 5.48 on a 7-degree scale. This means that the result is positioned above the middle of the scale (4), between answers stating "I tend to agree" and "I agree", which confirms a relatively high level of brand awareness among the respondents. It is worth highlighting that road carriers were assigned especially high ratings in connection with their names [A1]. On the basis of the opinion of the vast majority of the respondents (83%), the name of the company to which they outsource services is well known on the domestic transport market.

The respondents also showed willingness to form positive opinions about brand image [I]. The average score (5.04) is also positioned above the middle of the scale, although it is only slightly higher than the “rather positive” rating. In this case, the higher share of positive answers was recorded in the sub-scale related to the service quality guarantee [I2]. It turns out that as many as 80% of the respondents are not worried about the transport service that they have ordered.

The ratings related to brand equity [E] are much worse against this backdrop, as the average score equals 4.17, meaning that it is positioned only slightly above the middle of the scale. This suggests that the respondents do not have a clear opinion on this particular issue. In terms of the brand equity dimensions measured, the respondents were convinced the most about the need to continue cooperation with a given operator [E4]. According to the survey, more than half of the respondents (55%) confirmed their involvement in maintaining the current relationship.

4.2. Analysis of correlations between brand awareness, image and equity

Table 4 shows the results of the Spearman correlation analysis, as this approach was relied upon to verify whether any interdependencies exist between brand awareness [A], image [I] and equity [E]. The analysis showed that positive, highly significant correlations exist within two out of the three relationships examined, i.e. between brand awareness and image, on the one hand, and between brand image and its equity, on the other. No such interdependency has been identified in terms of brand awareness and equity.

The strongest correlations are observed between variables related to brand awareness and image, which means that an image boost is strongly related to an increase in brand awareness, i.e. to how widely a given brand is recognized when compared to its competitors. This correlation seems to be quite natural, considering the fact that both components constitute, actually, the same source of knowledge about a brand. It seems to be of particular importance that an improvement affecting brand image is also linked to an increase in its equity and vice versa, i.e. the worse the image of a given brand, the deeper the depreciation of its value in the eyes of its customers. This, in turn, translates directly into their buying decisions, as they are more immune to marketing activities.

Table 4

Analysis of correlation between the variables considered

No.	Direction of correlation	Correlation factor	p-value for the significance test
1.	Awareness [A] → Equity [E]	0.156	0.107
2.	Image [I] → Equity [E]	0.487	0.000**
3.	Awareness [A] → Image [I]	0.672	0.000**

4.3. Matrix of correlations between brand image and equity metrics

Table 5 shows the matrix of correlations between five brand image dimensions and four characteristics describing brand equity. In terms of the individual constituents of brand equity, a statistically significant correlation with brand image components was identified in three sub-scales pertaining to differentiation of the brand against other brands [E2], gaining an advantage over other brands [E3] and involving customers in the process of maintaining current cooperation [E4].

As shown by the survey, variable [E3] is positively correlated to four brand image dimensions pertaining, respectively, to certainty [I2] and quality of service [I3], esteem in the industry [I4] and a rich history [I5]. The result has, however, turned out to be statistically significant, and the strongest correlations were identified between scales [I4] and [E3], i.e. between the image of a carrier enjoying a strong position in the industry, and brand equity expressed by its ability to achieve a competitive advantage. All meaningful correlations are, however, mediocre or weak.

Table 5

Matrix of correlations between variables describing brand image and equity

Sub-scale		Brand equity			
		E1	E2	E3	E4
Brand image	I1	0.09	-0.12	0.09	0.28*
	I2	0.23	0.24*	0.24*	0.45**
	I3	0.18	0.10	0.32**	0.42**
	I4	-0.08	0.12	0.48**	0.12
	I5	0.02	0.06	0.39**	0.03

In terms of the [E4] scale, significant correlations were identified in three situations, i.e. between [E4] and image-related metrics [I1], [I2] and [I3]. Studies show that highly statistically significant correlations, although of medium importance in terms of their strength, were identified between scales [I2]-[E4] and [I3]-[E4], i.e. between image-related metrics in terms of the stability of service, high quality of transport offering and brand equity in the form of higher customer loyalty. Analysis of the correlation between variable [E2] of differentiation of the brand against other brands, and image-related metrics, showed a significant positive correlation only with one sub-scale [I2]. This means that the better the opinion of the respondents about a given carrier in terms of service stability, the more they were convinced about the fact that its brand differs from other brands. However, the strength of this correlation turned out to be insignificant.

On analysis of data from Table 5, one may notice that no statistically significant correlations are present between scale [E1] and variables characterizing brand image ([I1] - [I5]). It needs to be stressed that scale [E1] explicates brand image in terms of the respondent's readiness to accept higher prices. It is worth noting that although in the remaining scales the share of positive answers exceeded that of negative indications, the opposite was identified in the case of scale [E1]; most respondents questioned the correctness of the claim made. The average score in this scale (3.5) turned out to be below the center value (4), with negative answers clearly dominating (53%). This means that a typical respondent is not ready to pay more for a service if it is provided under a specific brand. In the case of such customers, their choices of transport services will be based on the lowest price criterion.

4.4. Brand equity vs. customer cooperation concerning transport services

Table 6 shows the results of an analysis of the correlations between brand equity and three parameters describing the course of cooperation between the customer and the carrier, i.e. its duration, as well as the type and number of entities responsible for handling deliveries. Analysis of the data shown in the table indicates that the correlation turned out to be statistically significant for each of the variable pairs, and that in the first two cases, the direction of the correlation turned out to be positive and in the third case, negative.

Table 6

Analysis of correlations between brand equity and course of cooperation

No.	Direction of correlation	Correlation factor	p-value for the significance test
1.	Equity → Cooperation (cooperation term)	0.394**	0.001
2.	Equity → Cooperation (scope of cooperation)	0.231*	0.05
3.	Equity → Cooperation (number of carriers)	-0.226*	0.05

The strongest correlation was identified between brand equity and duration of cooperation. The results show that the duration of cooperation between the carrier and the customer extends as brand equity increases. Furthermore, brand equity is weakly (but significantly) correlated with the scope of cooperation involving the provision of transportation services. Unlike in other cases, the existence of these correlations was assessed based on the chi-square method. The data indicate that as brand equity increases, the scope of cooperation changes as well, i.e. cooperation that is based on partial outsourcing evolves into full outsourcing, with the carrier playing a leading role in operating the customer's supply network, which is also confirmed by the correlation results pertaining to the third cooperation dimension. In this case, a moderately negative correlation between brand equity and the number of service providers performing deliveries was obtained, which means that the higher the brand equity, the lower the number of competitors with which the respondent was cooperating.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained based on the analyses performed have allowed the authors to positively verify five out of the six research hypotheses formulated. Most importantly, the analyses confirm the importance of brand equity in the operations of road freight transport companies, mainly due to statistically significant correlations that have been identified between brand equity and the specific aspects pertaining to the provision of transport services (H4-H6). This leads to the conclusion that brand equity may play an important role in strengthening customer cooperation that is based on stability and mutual trust.

The above results expand on the previous work by Grant and his team [26, p. 411], where authors found that brand equity has a positive relationship with the service levels experienced, and support the view of Marquardt, Golicic and Davis [27, p. 55], who suggested that brand can be a strong source of competitive advantages for transport and logistics service providers. However, our results introduce new characteristics in terms of the course of cooperation between the customers and the carriers.

It is also worth noting that with the strengthening of brand equity, the duration of cooperation increases as well. Importantly, the role of the carrier is also modified, as it becomes the leading supplier of transport services, thus taking over full responsibility over handling the customer's supply chain, often managing the work of other entities. This proves a high level of customers' loyalty and their readiness to accept an additional risk that is inherent in entrusting only one service provider with providing all transport-related services.

The results of this research show that brand equity is strongly correlated with brand image (H2). This means that the brand value perceived by customers varies depending on the level of popularity and reputation of the concerned company on the market. Thus, is particularly visible in the relationships between the image of a carrier that enjoys great esteem in the industry, guarantees stability and high quality of services and the competitive advantage and customer loyalty achieved thanks to brand equity. In addition, the inclination of the respondents to express positive opinions on brand equity increased with the improvement in brand awareness (H3). This correlation, translated into the language of economic practice, may mean that marketing activities are undertaken by carriers to strengthen the awareness of their brands, i.e. to reinforce demand, foster a positive image-related effect.

The research conducted failed to provide any grounds to validate hypothesis (H1), assuming the existence of a positive correlation between brand awareness and equity. It is worth quoting the results of studies performed by Davis, Golicic and Marquard [17, p. 225]; the authors claim that the impact of brand image on brand equity is higher than the influence that brand equity exerts on brand awareness. It seems that in this case, brand awareness may play the role of a mediating variable between the remaining variables, i.e. between brand image and equity. This leads to the conclusion that propagation of the transport brand image, without any marketing activities leading to an increase in the level of its awareness among the customers, may prove insufficient to be reflected by an increase in brand equity. This supposition requires empirical verification, however.

In terms of the establishment of brand equity, the lack of the respondents' readiness to accept higher prices poses a major challenge for the transport industry. These results come as no surprise. It is rather

obvious that customers expect, on such a highly competitive market, that the cost of transport services be reduced if a road carrier is entrusted with the handling of all of their transport-related needs. Therefore, it can safely be assumed that low prices of transport services offered by competitors will result in a decrease of the level of loyalty toward well-known transport brands.

5.1. Study-related limitations

The purposive sampling relied upon in this study does not guarantee the representative nature of the results obtained. The small size of the sample and the fact that only those respondents were included in the survey who cooperate with the carrier based on a service contract are major limitations. In practice, such customers account only for a small share of the overall customer base. In studies performed in early 2015, the existence of a service contract was only declared by 30% of the respondents [29, p. 333]. It is worth pointing out that non-parametric tools were used to test the hypotheses formulated, with the results achieved using such tools being considered less precise than with the use of parametric tests. Due to the strong correlation between brand awareness and image, future studies should focus on analyzing the correlation between individual dimensions of both variables. It would also be worthwhile to conduct an in-depth analysis of the impact that brand awareness exerts on the relationship between the remaining variables, which is not the subject of this study. The method of analysis of mediation effects may prove to be particularly useful as an element of such an analysis.

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Appendix. Description of scales structure

1. Brand awareness:

- 1.1. Name of the transport service provider (TSP) with whom we cooperate is well known in our industry [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].

- 1.2. The service provider we cooperate with is perceived to be a strong business partner on the market [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
- 1.3. In comparison to other service providers, our TSP is a leading brand on the market of transport services [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
2. **Brand image:**
 - 2.1. The service provider we cooperate with is known as an enterprise that takes care of relationships with their partners [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 2.2. We are certain how transport services will be provided by our provider [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 2.3. In comparison to other service providers, our TSP is an enterprise that consistently ensures high-quality services to its customers [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 2.4. In comparison to other service providers, our TSP is an enterprise respected in the industry [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 2.5. The brand of our TSP has a very rich history [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
3. **Brand equity:**
 - 3.1. We can pay more for cooperation with our service provider [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 3.2. The brand of our service provider is different than other transport brands [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 3.3. Name of the brand of our service provider has given them an advantage in comparison to other transport brands [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
 - 3.4. Our company is very committed to maintaining the current relationship with the transport service provider [1 - I fully disagree, 7 – I fully agree].
4. **Customer cooperation:**
 - 4.1. How long have you been working with your current transport provider? [several months, one year, two years, three years, four years and more].
 - 4.2. How do you outsource your transport services? [we outsource services without a contract, we cooperate with a service provider on a contractual basis, but we do not outsource all the transport activities, we cooperate with a service provider on a contract transport basis and we outsource all transport tasks and processes to him].
 - 4.3. How many TSP do you work with? [one, two, three or more].