



SELECTED INNOVATIVE MARKETING TOOLS IN DIY RETAIL – A REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to characterize and evaluate the use of selected innovative marketing tools implemented by retail enterprises in the DIY (Do It Yourself) sector in Poland. The theoretical part of the article presents the evolution of the concept of innovation, with particular emphasis on marketing innovation as a form of non-technological change. The discussion highlights how innovation has shifted from being a technology-centric activity to a customer-focused process of value creation¹. The empirical part is based on qualitative research conducted in 2025, using standardized interviews with five managers representing the leading DIY retail chains operating in Poland.

The study identifies the most relevant contemporary marketing innovations in the DIY sector, including the use of artificial intelligence for content personalization, the implementation of AR/VR visualization tools, omnichannel integration, sustainable branding practices, and private label development. The findings also indicate that DIY retailers are increasingly embracing agile assortment and pricing strategies, placing strong emphasis on customer experience, sales space design, and product display innovations.

¹ S. Zupok, Contemporary tools for creating customer value. *European Research Studies Journal*, Volume 27, Issue 4, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/3539>; S. Zupok, S. Creating added value for stakeholders: Case study. *Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Górnośląskiej*, 2023/30. <https://doi.org/10.53259/2023.9.18>; S. Zupok. *Kreowanie wartości dla klienta. Ekonomia i Organizacja Przedsiębiorstw*, nr 3, 2015.

The article concludes that innovation in the DIY retail sector is holistic and strategic, encompassing digital transformation, sustainability, personalization, and competitive positioning. The best practices identified in the study may serve as useful benchmarks for both academics and practitioners seeking to better understand the dynamics of marketing innovation in modern retail.

Key words: Innovative marketing tools, DIY retail, customer value, best practices, retail innovation

INTRODUCTION

Understanding what innovation is, what it represents, and how it influences value creation is essential for assessing any organization. The definitions of this concept evolve over time, just as the perspectives of those who formulate them do. These perspectives, in turn, reflect their experiences and the state of knowledge—both of which are in constant flux.

An analysis of innovation definitions and models from the early 20th century compared to those developed after 2000 reveals a fundamental shift in thinking. The earlier definitions tend to associate innovation with the introduction of something new into a company's operations, typically as a result of creative thinking and action. The classical theory of innovation, initiated by J. Schumpeter, is grounded in the idea that the innovator is an entrepreneur who establishes a business based on a new concept. According to Schumpeter, innovations are the driving force of the economy².

In the following stage, spanning from the 1930s to the 1960s—often referred to as the technological era—the dominant role of technology as a driver of innovation was emphasized. Innovation was primarily viewed through the lens of technological advancement, as reflected in the linear models of the innovation process. At the same time, it was recognized that innovation is essential for business survival and growth. In the 1970s, demand became closely linked to the emergence of new solutions. This perspective placed greater emphasis on deep knowledge of the customer, including their needs and preferences. As a result, marketing and quality management began to evolve in order to ensure that products and services could meet customer expectations.

The 1980s marked the rise and growing popularity of the so-called nonlinear innovation process model, which represented a significant departure from earlier linear approaches. In this model, innovation is no longer seen as a simple, sequential flow from research to development and then to market, but rather as a complex, iterative process involving simultaneous interactions between supply-side and demand-side factors. These elements—technological capabilities, market needs, organizational structures, and external

² J. Schumpeter's views on the sources of innovation evolved over time. S. Zupok, Wpływ innowacji na kreowanie wartości dla klienta. *Studia i Prace WNEiZ US (Journal of Management and Finance)*, 39/2, 2015.

feedback—interact dynamically and reciprocally, resulting in solutions that ultimately deliver value to the intended users of innovation.

This perspective highlights the importance of recognizing emerging market needs and aligning them with the enterprise's evolving technical and production possibilities. It also acknowledges that innovation is not confined within the boundaries of a company but is increasingly shaped by its interactions with the broader environment³.

In today's hypercompetitive and rapidly changing landscape, there is a clear redefinition of how innovation is understood and the role it plays in generating customer utility. The pace of technological advancement, shifting consumer behaviors, and the democratization of knowledge all contribute to a more open and collaborative innovation ecosystem. As a response to these pressures, companies are increasingly opening up to their external environment, embracing models that prioritize stakeholder involvement, cross-sector collaboration, and participatory innovation highlights the importance of recognizing emerging market needs and aligning them with the enterprise's evolving technical and production possibilities. It also acknowledges that innovation is not confined within the boundaries of a company but is increasingly shaped by its interactions with the broader environment.

Consequently, new innovation models are emerging that resemble co-production frameworks, where value is created jointly by firms and their customers or partners⁴. These models are often based on shared resources, real-time feedback, and agile development processes, allowing companies to better adapt to market demands while simultaneously fostering stronger relationships with their users. Such approaches not only enhance innovation outcomes but also contribute to long-term competitiveness and customer loyalty⁵.

It is worth noting that C. Christensen, contributing to the debate on innovation, distinguished between radical changes—also referred to as disruptive innovations, which alter the course of development—and incremental ones, also known as sustaining innovations. In practice, companies are increasingly focusing on incremental innovation, as it responds more directly to customers' expressed needs and expectations⁶.

Today, successful organizations increasingly embrace customer-driven innovation as a central component of their strategic development. These innovations are rooted in the expressed needs, preferences, and feedback of customers, focusing primarily on enhancing product functionality, improving quality, and

³ I. Rutkowski, *Rozwój nowego produktu. Metody i uwarunkowania*, PWE, Warszawa 2007.

⁴ S. Zupok, *Tworzenie wartości dla interesariuszy w gospodarce o obiegu zamkniętym*. *Studia Prawno-Ekonomiczne*, 2021/120; S. Zupok, *Wartość dla klienta a cele organizacji [Customer value and organizational goals]*. *Studia i Prace WNEIZ US*, 2018/5. <https://doi.org/10.18276/SIP.2018.53/3-07>

⁵ S.L. Vargo, Stephen, R.F. Lusch. *Service-Dominant Logic: Continuing the Evolution*. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, vol. 36, no. 1.

⁶ C.M. Christensen. *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston 1997.

refining user experience. Understood in this way, innovation refers to any novel idea, method, or solution that is implemented in a significantly different manner to generate value—not only for the organization itself but also for its customers, suppliers, and, more broadly, for society as a whole.

Such innovation extends beyond technical improvement; it encompasses social and environmental impact, responsible business practices, and sustainable development goals. Therefore, innovation is intrinsically linked to value creation—it becomes a means through which companies can differentiate themselves, build stronger stakeholder relationships, and contribute meaningfully to the common good⁷.

The selected definitions presented above illustrate the broad and multifaceted nature of innovation—ranging from minor product improvements to groundbreaking transformations, not only in the technological domain but also within services, organizational structures, marketing, and even in areas such as public policy and social phenomena⁸. At the same time, innovation is increasingly recognized as a socially complex, challenging, and dynamic process. According to the authors of the publication, the issue of innovation should be examined through the lens of its ultimate purpose within management: the maximization of customer value.

Regardless of the type of innovation, several key categories of innovative value are considered particularly important to modern consumers. These include:

- enhanced utility of products and services,
- customer benefits linked to the rarity and exclusivity of the innovation,
- prestige, emotional connection with the provider, and the customer's influence on the innovation process,
- personalization and individual tailoring of value.

Undoubtedly, a customer-oriented approach—placing the satisfaction of customer needs at the core of a company's mission and aligning all business activities around this central objective—holds profound significance and strategic justification. This shift in perspective has led modern management theories to reshape and reinforce organizational goal structures by emphasizing the role of the customer not merely as a passive recipient of value, but as an active buyer and co-creator of innovation.

Reframing corporate objectives in this way necessitates the development and implementation of new methods and tools to achieve them. As a result, a range of innovative concepts and practices has emerged to

⁷ S.M. Lee, D.L. Olson, S. Trimi. Co-innovation: convergenomics, collaboration, and co creation for organizational values. „Management Decision” 2012, No. 5; S. Zupok. Zaufanie klienta jako kluczowy czynnik budowy wartości przedsiębiorstw handlu detalicznego typu DIY. Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Zarządzanie 42 (3), 2015.

⁸ M.S. Islam, F. Azizzadeh, S. Zupok. Business research process: Easing beginners' attempt. J. Contemp. Res. Bus. Adm. Econ. Sci. (BAES-JCR) 2022; M.S. Islam, F. Azizzadeh, S. Zupok, A. Hosseini, L/ Jones-Esan, L. Service Employees' Expressions of Emotions in Restaurants: A Transcendental Phenomenology Study. J. Environ. Manag. Tour. 2022.

support this paradigm, including open innovation, where knowledge flows in and out of the organization⁹; user-driven innovation (UDI), which starts with the needs and feedback of customers¹⁰; design thinking, emphasizing empathy and iterative problem-solving; crowdsourcing, leveraging the collective intelligence of users and external contributors; and product personalization, which aims to tailor offerings to individual preferences and expectations.

These approaches reflect the evolving role of the customer in the innovation process and demonstrate how organizations can create sustainable competitive advantage by embedding customer value at the heart of their innovation strategies.

To summarize the above considerations, it is worth emphasizing that innovation has evolved from a technology-driven approach to a customer-oriented process of value creation. Modern organizations increasingly focus on incremental innovation, personalization, and co-creation with stakeholders, which fosters long-term competitive advantage.

MARKETING INNOVATION AS A FORM OF NON-TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

One of the most fundamental and commonly used classifications of innovation is the division based on its subject matter—namely, whether it is technological or non-technological in nature¹¹. Marketing innovations fall into the latter category and involve significant changes in a company's adopted marketing strategy. These may include aesthetic or other creative modifications to products that do not involve technical solutions and have not previously been used by the company. Such innovations are typically implemented to better meet customer needs, enter new markets, or reposition the company within existing market.

Marketing innovations in the operations of retail enterprises can be classified within the main areas of the marketing mix, namely: the design of the point of sale, distribution systems, promotional activities, and pricing strategies¹². These initiatives involve the implementation of novel solutions aimed at influencing the target market, including:

- the development of new store formats and their spatial allocation across various geographic markets;
- modifications to the structure of the product and service offering, the introduction of innovative product display concepts, and changes in the arrangement of the sales area;

⁹ H. Chesbrough. *Open innovation: The new imperative for creating and profiting from technology*. Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, 2003.

¹⁰ E. von Hippel. *Democratizing innovation*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005.

¹¹ F. Gault, *Defining and measuring innovation in all sectors of the economy*. *Research Policy*, 2018, 47(3), 617–622.

¹² D. Grewal, A.L. Roggeveen, J. Nordfält. *The Future of Retailing*. *Journal of Retailing*, 2017, 93(1), 1–6.

- the implementation of electronic distribution channels, including mobile applications that support the shopping process;
- visual transformation of retail outlets, encompassing changes in the form, colour schemes, and graphic identifiers (e.g., logos), as well as the aesthetics of the store environment;
- the use of modern communication methods with consumers, including loyalty programmes, innovative promotional concepts, and alternative advertising media and techniques such as TV advertising, electronic in-store terminals, product demonstrations and tastings, branded display equipment, promotional leaflets, product posters, POS TV advertising, shelf-talkers, danglers, display stands, or the use of a well-known person portrayed as a product user;
- the positioning of the corporate brand and the retailer's private label brand;
- the adoption of innovative pricing strategies for products and services, including discount systems and the initial application of new methods of price adjustment depending on demand levels.

In the current business environment, marketing innovations are undergoing substantial transformation, primarily driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer expectations, and growing pressure for sustainable development¹³. The most significant contemporary approaches include:

1. Application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Content Personalization. Modern AI-based systems enable the creation of highly personalized marketing content that resonates more deeply with individual consumers. By analyzing behavioral data and user preferences, AI facilitates the delivery of tailored content, enhancing customer engagement and loyalty.
2. Integration of Neurological Analysis in Marketing Content Design. The use of advanced neural networks in evaluating the effectiveness of marketing content helps identify elements that attract consumer attention. This approach allows marketers to optimize campaign designs by adjusting visual and textual messages in accordance with consumers' neurological responses and preferences.
3. The Fifth Generation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The latest development in the concept of IMC expands its focus to incorporate three crucial pillars: Profit, People, and Planet. This evolution reflects a shift towards marketing strategies that not only aim at financial success but also address social and environmental responsibilities, aligning with rising consumer expectations regarding corporate accountability.
4. Expansion of Social Commerce. Social media platforms are increasingly integrating shopping functionalities, allowing consumers to make purchases directly within the applications. In

¹³ R. Monica, Aswin Varghese Soju. Artificial intelligence and service marketing innovation. AI Innovation in Services Marketing. IGI Global, 2024.

response, marketers are adapting their strategies to fully leverage the potential of these platforms by designing engaging content and campaigns aimed at digital communities.

5. Implementation of Predictive Analytics in Marketing Decision-Making. AI-driven predictive analytics tools enable firms to forecast market trends, shifts in consumer behavior, and the effectiveness of marketing activities. These insights support more informed decision-making, campaign optimization, and improved return on marketing investments.

These innovative approaches not only reflect the dynamic evolution of marketing practices but also highlight the growing importance of data-driven, consumer-centric, and ethically responsible strategies. As technological capabilities continue to advance, the integration of such innovations is expected to become a standard component of competitive marketing in the retail sector.

INNOVATIVE MARKETING TOOLS IN THE DIY RETAIL SECTOR: EVIDENCE FROM ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The aim of the article is to characterize and evaluate the application of innovative marketing tools used by DIY retail enterprises in 2024¹⁴. At the initial stage of the study, specific research objectives and hypotheses were formulated to guide the direction of the empirical analysis. To verify them, direct interviews based on a standardized questionnaire were conducted between February and March 2025. The study involved five managers representing leading DIY retail companies operating in Poland. The analysis focuses on identifying key marketing innovations implemented in the sector and assessing their potential impact on consumer purchasing behavior.

According to the findings of the conducted research, innovative marketing solutions were implemented in the analyzed DIY retail outlets. Based on the participants' declarations, in addition to marketing communication activities, particular attention was paid to introducing innovations in the design and organization of the sales space.

The majority of changes were implemented in the arrangement of the retail area, especially through the installation of additional display racks, the reorganization of product category layouts (both within the store and on individual shelves), and the modification of checkout zones, including adjustments to the number of cash registers and the placement of impulse-buy products.

¹⁴ The sampling method used in the study was purposive, with the primary selection criteria being the specialization of retail outlets in DIY (Do It Yourself) product sales and their location within Poland. The choice of specific retail chains was justified by their dominant position in the Polish DIY market—Castorama and Leroy Merlin are the undisputed market leaders, jointly accounting for approximately 56% of the sector. Another 36% of the market is covered by major players such as OBI, Bricomarché, and PSB Mrówka, making them key stakeholders in the industry. The interviews were conducted with managers or executives representing these selected chains: Castorama, Leroy Merlin, OBI, Bricomarché, and PSB. This selection allowed for the collection of representative insights into the use of innovative marketing tools in the Polish DIY retail sector.

Such actions play a significant role in shaping customers' purchasing decisions and contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of retail outlets in the market. The layout of a DIY store should allow customers to move freely, even during peak hours, while also providing sufficient space for effective product presentation. At the same time, the retail space must be optimally utilized, ensuring customer safety and overall protection. An appropriate store layout and atmosphere in DIY retail outlets significantly influence the customer's mood and reflect the evolving expectations of consumers. For many shoppers, the emotional and sensory experience during the purchasing process is just as important as the product itself. A well-designed environment—featuring thoughtful product placement, intuitive navigation, and an inviting ambiance—enhanced by tailored pricing or promotional strategies, can effectively stimulate purchasing behavior. In many cases, it may even encourage unplanned purchases, contributing to increased basket value and customer satisfaction.

Managers also introduced additional product displays aimed at boosting sales, such as pallets, promotional islands, freestanding racks, branded shelving units, checkout area stands, hanging displays, as well as refrigerated units—either integrated or freestanding—and various types of display materials (e.g., trays, shelves, cardboard structures). In a significant number of stores, advertising displays provided by manufacturers were also used to support sales activities. Point-of-sale (POS) materials remain one of the most frequently applied in-store promotional tools, closely aligned with the branding strategies of promoted products. Increasingly creative and visually appealing display formats effectively capture customers' attention and enhance the overall shopping experience.

According to the statements of representatives of the surveyed DIY retail enterprises, significant changes were implemented in some stores regarding the visual identity of the point of sale. These modifications included alterations in color schemes, graphic signage formats, and the overall appearance of both the store interior and its surroundings. In many cases, adjustments involved refreshing the logo, introducing visually consistent design elements, using modern finishing materials, and reorganizing entrance areas and product zones in line with current aesthetic trends and evolving customer expectations.

The visual image of a retail outlet in the DIY sector plays a crucial role in shaping the shopping experience and can influence purchasing decisions even before customers enter the store. An attractive, modern, and well-organized retail environment not only draws customer attention but also builds trust in the brand, enhances the perceived quality of the offering, and improves navigation and comfort during the shopping process. In a highly competitive market, attention to store aesthetics and visual coherence becomes a key factor in developing a strong competitive advantage.

It is important to emphasize that in all of the analyzed DIY retail chains, assortment strategies are continuously updated and adapted to changing market conditions and evolving customer needs. The structure of the product assortment plays a fundamental role in the overall marketing strategy of DIY enterprises. Each

retail unit must clearly define which categories of products and services it intends to offer, taking into account both national and international brands, as well as the development of private labels.

Assortment planning involves decisions related to the industry scope, the structure and range of product lines, brand selection (including private label development), and the formulation of a coherent strategic approach. In the context of DIY retail, particular attention is paid to ensuring appropriate assortment width—referring to the variety of product lines such as hand tools, building materials, paints, gardening supplies, and home improvement items—as well as assortment depth, which denotes the number of variations and models available within a single product line (e.g., different sizes, colors, or manufacturing technologies).

A well-structured assortment enables retailers not only to meet diverse customer expectations but also to strengthen the store's market positioning, increase product turnover, and build a sustainable competitive advantage within the DIY sector.

All respondents unanimously confirmed that their respective DIY retail stores had adopted an assortment strategy based on broad and deep product lines. This strategic orientation reflects the sector's effort to address the increasingly diversified expectations of customers who seek both variety across product categories and a wide selection within each category. The simultaneous pursuit of assortment width and depth allows DIY retailers to position themselves as comprehensive solution providers—whether for home improvement, gardening, renovation, or construction projects.

In several of the surveyed stores, assortment line extension strategies were actively implemented. These included broadening existing product lines by introducing new categories, as well as deepening lines by adding more variants, such as different sizes, finishes, functionalities, and technologies tailored to various customer segments (e.g., amateur users vs. professional contractors). The product line extension also enabled stores to respond dynamically to emerging trends and seasonal demand.

At the same time, a comparable number of stores adopted more selective and efficiency-oriented approaches. These included the implementation of narrow and deep product line strategies, focusing on fewer categories with greater specialization, as well as strategies aimed at streamlining the assortment. Streamlining was carried out through assortment pruning, which involved the elimination of underperforming SKUs, reducing redundancy, and increasing visual and functional consistency on the shelf. These actions were often combined with efforts to strengthen the coherence of the assortment in terms of brand positioning, quality standards, and customer expectations.

In some cases, assortment narrowing was also used as a strategic tool to improve operational efficiency, reduce inventory complexity, and better focus marketing and promotional efforts on core product categories. Such adjustments were perceived as a response to competitive pressures, rising logistics costs, and the growing need for clarity and simplicity in customer decision-making processes.

Overall, the findings indicate that assortment management in the DIY retail sector is a dynamic and deliberately shaped process, closely aligned with market positioning strategies, customer insights, and operational capabilities. Whether through expansion or rationalization, assortment strategy serves as a key instrument for enhancing customer satisfaction, optimizing inventory, and building a sustainable competitive advantage.

Private labels have become a key strategic element in the assortment management of DIY retail chains. They offer retailers greater control over pricing, quality, and brand identity, while also increasing customer loyalty and improving profit margins. In the DIY sector, private labels are particularly prominent in categories such as tools, paints, adhesives, gardening equipment, and home improvement accessories.

Major DIY chains in Poland have developed extensive private label portfolios. For example, Castorama offers GoodHome (interior solutions), Verve (gardening). Leroy Merlin features Dexter (tools), Geolia (gardening), and Artens (flooring). OBI promotes LUX (tools) and Livarno (furniture and lighting), while Bricomarché and PSB Mrówka also actively develop their own brands across core DIY categories.

These private labels often cover multiple quality tiers—from budget to premium—allowing retailers to target a broad customer base. Supported by in-store marketing and modern packaging, private labels in DIY are no longer seen merely as cheaper alternatives but as trusted and competitive options that contribute significantly to brand positioning and assortment differentiation.

All surveyed DIY retail chains implement pricing and assortment strategies as an integral part of their competitive positioning. These strategies are aimed at offering attractive prices—especially compared to competitors—while maintaining a broad and accessible product range. The chains actively manage private label pricing, apply flexible pricing models, and adopt modern promotional mechanisms. Cost reduction, outsourcing, and real-time market price monitoring technologies are commonly used to support these efforts.

Regular price meetings are held to adjust prices based on market trends, competitor actions, and customer demand. Retailers also optimize and adjust product margins, ensuring alignment with perceived value and product lifecycle stages. These practices are consistently applied across all analyzed DIY chains and are considered essential for improving market responsiveness and maintaining a competitive edge.

As part of the qualitative research conducted, representatives of the surveyed DIY retail chains were also asked about the latest marketing innovations implemented in their stores. Respondents unanimously emphasized that, in response to growing customer expectations, technological progress, and intensified market competition, marketing activities are becoming increasingly dynamic, integrated, digital, and customer-oriented. Chains such as Leroy Merlin and Castorama have introduced AI-based systems that analyze customer data to deliver personalized product recommendations and offers via mobile apps and websites. Visualization tools using augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR) allow customers to preview renovations or garden projects virtually before making a purchase decision. Omnichannel strategies are also being actively developed—services such as “buy online, pick up in store” are now standard, while features

like one-hour reservations, barcode scanning, and personalized coupons improve the shopping experience. In-store technologies such as electronic shelf labels (ESL), interactive kiosks, and real-time inventory systems enhance operational efficiency and responsiveness. Sustainability has become a key theme across chains, with initiatives including eco-friendly product lines, recycling programs, and educational campaigns promoting energy-efficient home improvement solutions. At the same time, DIY retailers are increasing their presence on social media through instructional videos, live expert sessions, and user-generated content, which not only support sales but also build community engagement. Overall, the findings suggest that marketing innovations in the DIY sector are holistic and strategic, reflecting broader trends in digital transformation, consumer empowerment, and sustainability.

The conducted study confirms that DIY retail chains in Poland are actively embracing a wide range of innovative marketing tools, integrating them into both strategic and operational dimensions of their business models. These innovations—spanning from personalized digital experiences to in-store technological advancements—play a critical role in enhancing customer engagement, improving efficiency, and strengthening competitive positioning. As market conditions evolve, continued adaptation and innovation will remain essential for the long-term success of DIY retailers.

CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this article provide a comprehensive overview of how Polish DIY retail chains adopt and implement innovative marketing tools to improve their market position and meet the evolving expectations of consumers. The research confirms that innovation in the DIY sector is not limited to product development or digital transformation but also encompasses the design of the sales environment, assortment strategy, pricing models, and communication with customers.

The study highlights the importance of customer-oriented innovation, especially in areas such as personalization, omnichannel experience, private label development, and the use of AI and AR/VR technologies. These practices demonstrate that innovation in retail marketing is no longer a marginal activity but a central component of competitive strategy. In light of the observed trends, future success in the DIY sector will depend on the ability of retailers to continuously adapt to technological change, integrate sustainability into their value propositions, and co-create innovation with customers and partners. The review of best practices may serve as a reference point for both scholars and practitioners seeking to understand and enhance innovation capacity in retail marketing.

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