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Developing an Integrated Marketing Mix Based on the Behavior of Industrial Customer: The Case of Behran Oil Company

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in order to develop an integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior in the oil products market. The statistical population consisted of experts and managers of oil industry, from among which a sample of 15 people was selected using purposeful techniques. Semi-structured interviews were performed for data collection, and data analysis was based on grounded theory via axial, selective, and open coding process. The resulting model was ultimately identified as a template for integrated marketing mix model based on the industrial customer behavior. The findings showed that for the development of an integrated marketing mix based on the development of industrial customer behavior, industry managers should closely consider all categories and subcategories distinguished in this study and obtain adequate information about all of them. Besides, this study shows that there is a need to pay attention to the development of an integrated marketing mix based on the behavior of industrial customers.

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1. Introduction

In the current business environment, a key success factor for every organization is to meet the needs of target markets and satisfy them much more efficiently than competitors (Miao et al., 2016). For this purpose, a regular plan should be considered to deliver items to customers and set a long-term relationship between the organization and consumers. However, the plenitude of choices is not merely confined to the consumer market. Rather, in industrial markets, there is also a great deal of variety (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). On the other hand, the development of diverse products and services, globalization, and intense rivalry force markets to distinguish their products from other companies and value their buyers (Luxdon et al., 2015). Neither innovation nor technical superiority can ensure the business success any longer; rather, it is the marketing mix that differentiates a firm from its competitors from consumers' viewpoint (Ateba et al., 2015). It is one of the ways to build a sustainable contentious advantage in these markets, which has been less discussed before (Hasebi & Shojaei, 2020). Despite several studies in the field of marketing mix, this concept represents an area that still needs further research. Since marketing mix has been the focus of B2C marketing research (Bazhan et al., 2018; Efanny et al., 2018), providing a general and comprehensive marketing mix model in B2B context is something that requires more research and effort.

Industrial marketing is fundamentally different from conventional marketing. Industrial marketing practices are directed to sell goods and services to industrial companies and institutional customers, which represents a kind of business-to-business (B2B) marketing (Salo, 2017). Industrial customers use the purchased materials to produce other goods. In other words, while in conventional marketing, the customer is the end user, in industrial marketing, the customer is an intermediary and not the end consumer (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020). On the other hand, the number of customers in industrial marketing is less than conventional markets (B2C marketing), but the volume of goods and services sold is often much higher. These features make industrial marketing a unique field; therefore, special considerations should be taken in formulating industrial marketing strategies (Ellram & Murfield, 2019). It is well established that marketing mix elements can also be used in industrial field (B2B); however, due to its unique features, the industrial marketing mix model is fundamentally different from that of B2C (Bag et al., 2021). For example, the negotiation power and long-term contracts that characterize B2B marketing are less common in the B2C marketing mix (Keegan et al., 2022).

There are several antecedents for integrating marketing mix elements, e.g., every marketing activity has the potential to affect consumers' purchasing decisions since these activities attest to the impact of marketing investments on the purchase decision (Efanny et al., 2018). The major challenge for industrial marketers in constituting a strong brand is to recognize the factors that allow the customers to reach relevant experiences from marketing services and programs through a sequence of marketing options (Rahimi et al., 2019), meaning that propitious thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of the customer affect their purchase decisions (Miao & Evans, 2014). As a result, an integrated marketing mix based on customer behavior is the key to the business prosperity of every service and manufacturing company. Although the importance of marketing mix in industrial context has been repeatedly mentioned by researchers, it is essential to identify the key components of an industrial marketing mix in a B2B business.

According to Stenberg & Wallin Gyökeres (2005), the competition is not between what companies produce in their factories, but between what they add to their output in form of packaging, services, advertising, customer advice, financing, delivery arrangements, warehousing, and other things that people value (Stenberg & Wallin Gyökeres., 2005). This is also the case for mature markets such as oil and gas that have reached their saturation point. It is difficult to sell new physical goods in this type of market, and hence, the suppliers have to find new alternative ways if they want to keep their market shares and satisfy their customers' needs (Alidrisi et al., 2019).

Although marketing mix is a well-known concept in the literature, a large number of previous studies have examined this concept in the field of B2C, while little effort has been made to introduce a model in the industrial market. However, the concept of "marketing mix" in B2B is as important as it is in B2C. On the other hand, most previous research is based on the famous 4Ps model and has tested this model in various markets (for example, Chou et al., 2020; Kaur et al., 2022). Although valuable in nature, such studies are based on a predetermined model, and hence, they do not add much to our current knowledge. Based on this, the major contributions of the present paper is to avoid reevaluation

of the 4p model and to present a new model for marketing mix that not only enhances the existing knowledge, but also has practical implications for the managers of manufacturing companies. Particularly in the oil industry, it is important to provide a B2B marketing mix model to meet the needs of buyer parties. This is especially the case in the current condition in which the Iranian oil industry is facing severe international sanctions. We argue that developing and implementing an industrial marketing mix model can help oil company executives gain new customers and be more profitable. However, the main gap in the research is that a B2B-specific marketing mix has not been developed and implemented in the Iranian oil industry. The present study seeks - and hopefully expects - its conceptual model to bridge this gap.

The use of conventional B2C marketing mix patterns may not meet the specific requirements of industrial marketing (Sarmad & Abdollahi, 2015); hence, it is necessary to design a mixed model of marketing in accordance with its characteristics. Therefore, the main motivations of the present study include the importance of marketing mix for product sales and the difference between industrial and traditional marketing mix models. It should be noted that although one of the factors affecting the behavior of industrial customers is to choose the desired marketing mix, Behran Oil Company suffers from the lack of a clear plan to build a marketing mix to advance the company's marketing goals. However, the company has initiated extensive marketing activities in recent years. This trend has prompted managers and policymakers of various marketing areas to often act without a specific plan and strategy, and in some cases take contradictory actions. This calls for formulating a sophisticated and comprehensive marketing mix model for the company.

The major gap in the literature is the scarcity (if not saying lack) of industrial marketing mix models, especially in the oil industry. While numerous studies have been done on the B2C context, the literature still suffers from a lack of industrial marketing mix models. The purpose of this study is to address this gap. Given the importance of marketing mix in industrial businesses, this article seeks to identify the components of industrial marketing mix (B2B) with a qualitative approach and introduce them in the form of a comprehensive model. To achieve reliable results, the views of experts and grounded theory have been used in this research. The rest of the article is organized as follows. The next section reviews the literature to explain the key concepts and underlying theories associated with the industrial marketing mix. The next section describes the research methodology, including the statistical population, data collection, and data analysis methods. The next part of the article is dedicated to presenting the results of data coding and grounded theory. In this section, causal factors, contextual factors, intervening conditions, central phenomena, strategies, and consequences are clearly stated. Then, the research findings are discussed and the results are compared with those of previous research. This article concludes with a final conclusion about the research findings.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this article is to describe a model of marketing mix based on the behavior of industrial customers (buyers). Considerable knowledge on organizational buyer behavior exists already; however, these data are to some extent scattered (as they have been collected and reported by individual studies). Therefore, there is an urgent need for reconciliation and integration of existing knowledge into a realistic and comprehensive model of marketing mix.

Marketing mix is a combination of the four elements of product, price, promotion, and place (distribution) that a company uses to achieve market goals. Companies use these elements to achieve a marketing plan in the target market (Lim, 2021). It represents a fundamental model in marketing management and a powerful tool that enables the marketers to define their marketing strategy. Marketers use this tool to determine the appropriate responses to the desired market segments (Ho et al., 2022). Elements of this concept are among the factors that are under the control of management and, hence, it can be claimed that most marketing programs and decisions are made based on one of these four areas (Kaur et al., 2022). Elements of marketing mix affect consumers and their decisions depending on the type of product and its characteristics, pricing and payment methods, distribution facilities, and methods of persuasion and promotion. Product type, product features, advertising and promotions, availability and price are the main factors of purchase intention in managing consumer behavior (Budiyono et al., 2021). Although 4Ps is the dominant B2C marketing model, other factors must be included in industrial marketing (B2B context) (Cortez et al., 2021).

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) presented a definition of an integrated marketing mix as follows:

An integrated marketing mix which is in the form of a comprehensive communication plan assesses the strategic roles of a variety of communication tools such as advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, and public connections. By mixing those tools it seeks to make them clarified, sustainable, and maximize the impact of marketing communications (Cortez et al., 2021).

This definition stresses the process of practicing all forms of promotion to maximize the effectiveness of communication. However, some authors (e.g., Pomeroy, 2017) argue that marketing communication has got a higher value than the abovementioned items and includes all communications and contacts of a company with customers like the brand, the image of the company, etc. (Shankar & Chin, 2011). Many companies adopt the broad notion of integrated marketing communications to organize and conduct their communication plans to assure that they render customers with a steady and effective image of the company and its brand (Muchiri et al., 2016). The concept of integrated marketing communications assists companies with utilizing suitable and practical methods of communication and contact with customers and other beneficiaries' employees, raw material suppliers, investors, and other relevant institutions (Kraak et al., 2019). The integrated marketing mix is one of the notions applied in strategic marketing management and market planning, and it means integrating all marketing movements and activities of the organization concerning customers and other beneficiaries. It is to make sure that these activities do not work in isolation, and they are all in line with the predetermined objectives of the organization's vision and assignment (Zablah et al., 2012).

The concept of marketing suggests that industry is the process of satisfying the customer, not the process of manufacturing products. Industrial marketing practices commence with the customer and his needs, not by franchise, raw materials, or sales skills (Lim, 2021). An organization can last in business field if it can meet the needs of the customers (Ghannad, 2011). Other factors involved in customer behavior includes, but not limited to, accelerated introduction of brand-new products, shorter commodity life cycles, enhancement of supporting consumer movements' aspects by private groups and public policymakers, attention to the environment, and the growth of service marketing (Keller, 2009). Customer behavior is a process that encompasses three related steps: pre-purchase, in-purchase, and post-purchase activities (Sarmad & Abdollahi, 2015). In the following, the associated studies in this field are discussed.

Effective marketing strategies rely on thorough knowledge about the customers' behavior (Zherdetska et al., 2021). Industrial purchasing behavior can be defined as "the decision-making process by which formal organizations establish the need for purchase certain products (or services) and identify, evaluate, and choose among alternative brands and suppliers (Bachkirov, 2019). Within asset-intensive industries such as oil industry, the concept of marketing mix gains much more attention due to the presence of numerous strong competitors, great range of buyers' choices, increasing demand for warranty and delivery services, etc. (Alavijeh et al., 2019). Industrial purchasing behavior (sometimes called organizational buying behavior) is a field of industrial marketing that focuses on the understanding of how companies and organizations buy goods and services (Salo, 2017). With some scholars, industrial buying behavior is a "complex process of decision making and communication, which takes place over time, involving several organizational members and relationships with other firms and institutions" (Webster & Wind, 1972, as cited by Muller et al., 2018).

Industrial marketing, most often called business-to-business (B2B) marketing, is a branch of business activities that provides goods and services to other companies, not to individual customers. Because industrial marketing often involves large orders and long-term relationships between the manufacturer and the customer, the process is often more complex than a single relation between a firm and a typical customer (Nenonen et al., 2019). While B2C sales may focus on one-to-one interactions, businesses are usually made up of large numbers of people. Before the product appears on the shelves of another store, the two industrial companies (seller and buyer) must reach an agreement about the production, purchase, and delivery of thousands of products (Salo, 2017). Many companies produce goods that have no application at the individual level; therefore, their only customer will be other companies (Ellram & Murfield, 2019). Due to the high value of some purchases (for example, the purchase of a new computer system, the construction machinery, or the outsourcing

of a maintenance contract) and the complexity of these types of purchases, the buyer party seeks different offers from competing suppliers and selects the best offer. The sum of such features distinguishes industrial marketing from conventional (B2C) marketing (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020).

Studying the factors affecting the marketing of petrochemical products in Thailand, Thanabordeekij and Syers (2020) showed that there is a direct relationship between marketing mix and customer loyalty. In a case study on Shell Petrol, Niazi & Shamugia. (2021) found that the elements of marketing mix have a positive and significant effect on improving the brand equity of the company. In another B2B study, Wieland (2018) showed that using a specific program to develop a marketing mix has a significant effect on increasing sales and improving the marketing performance of small and medium enterprises.

Sarmad and Abdollahi (2015), aiming at the prioritization of integrated marketing communication tools (IMC) in the food industry, explained that amongst IMC tools, advertising had the highest rank in the food industry. Moreover, it was found that promoting lotteries, and prizes were the most effective means of communication among the advertising channels. Bazhan et al. (2018) reported high difference in women's attitude to various characters of a product. Wu and Li (2018) explicate that all components of the marketing mix have a meaningful impression on consumption value. Besides, customer value positively influences customer loyalty and purchasing behavior. In addition, Alaviheh et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between marketing mix and brand value and concluded that the elements of marketing endeavors such as supplier image, distribution strategy, and push and pull advertising have a significant impact on green product buying intention. Literature review shows that the development of marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior has drawn less attention. To this end, it can be asserted that the discourses of the industrial marketing mix and the behavior of industrial customers needs further research.

3. Research Methodology

The present study was carried out to develop an integrated marketing mix based on the behavior of industrial customer in Behran Oil Company. This is an applied-developmental study conducted as a cross-sectional study during 2020-2021. The main questions of the research include what follows:

- What are the best components of a suitable marketing mix for the company?
- Which factors pave the road to develop such a marketing mix?
- Which conditions intervene with developing a practical marketing mix for this company?
- What are the main strategies that should be implemented to achieve a suitable marketing mix in industrial context?
- What are the outcome of such a marketing mix for an industrial company?

According to the purpose of the research and considering that there is no reliable background in relation to the marketing mix in Iran's oil industry; qualitative methodology has been used. According to Smith (1996), if the information available in a particular field is so scarce that even recognizing what the unknowns are itself problematic, a more qualitative approach should be used. Qualitative research uses qualitative data such as interview data, participatory observation, documentation, questionnaires, etc., to understand and explain complex phenomena. Qualitative research involves methods in which the researcher has no pre-determined hypotheses about the subject under study. In such studies, the researcher's goal is to study the "quality of the phenomenon" studied, not its quantity (Mills & Birks, 2014).

Although the marketing mix is often considered in the form of well-known models such as 4Ps, it is indeed a very complex concept whose formation and success are influenced by several factors. Given the complexity of the marketing mix in the industrial context and considering that our goal was to provide a new model, we selected an exploratory qualitative methodology to achieve the model. Among the exploratory qualitative methods, grounded theory has a coherent structure and process that makes it a suitable option for the present study. Therefore, in the present study, this method was used to identify the underlying factors of industrial marketing mix model. Grounded theory is a good approach to extract the key components related to a phenomenon. Therefore, in this study, using grounded theory, all the factors involved in the B2B marketing mix (including causal, contextual, intervening, pivotal, strategies and consequences) were identified and, hence, a comprehensive model of the B2B marketing mix was obtained.

Purposive sampling was adopted to choose the sample. The data collection was done through profound semi-structured interviews with experts. Management experts in Behran Oil Company constituted the statistical population of the present study. All interviews were recorded and exploited for coding, correction, and feedback. A total of 15 people were interviewed. Data collection continued to the extent of the theoretical saturation of the categories when no new data could be accessed. Table 1 summarizes the typology of the existing study:

Table 1. Research Typology

Dimension	Current Study	Description
Philosophical foundations	Interpretive paradigm	It relies on an integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior to investigate varying dimensions.
Orientation	Applied-developmental	It's practical because it analyzes the integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior within the petroleum industry according to the grounded theory to present practical recommendations to develop these relationships. It is developmental because it contributes to knowledge enhancement by rendering a model with new variables.
Approach	Inductive	First, the data collection is taken care of, and then the relevant hypotheses are conferred. This approach attempts to theorize.
Data collection	Qualitative	Understanding the phenomenon in its platform and learning the meaning that exists in the minds of subjects is sought, not the quantity of data.
Objective	Exploratory	The object is to design and improve a comprehensive model that illustrates more features belonging to the phenomenon of the integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior.
Strategy	Foundation data theorizing	According to the objectives and questions of the research.
Data collection tools and methods	Interview	To perform the grounded theory as a matter of data collection, face-to-face, semi-structured and unstructured, anthropological, and in-depth interviews are commonly employed.

Interviewing with experts was the data collection instrument. Managers and heads of marketing, senior marketing consultants, and so on have been the participants from the industry. To this end, by utilizing the interview protocol, a sample of petroleum industry managers were interviewed, providing the research with its necessary information. A summary of experts' characteristics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Expert Panel Participating in the Research

Experts	Organizational position	Experience (years)
1	Head of sales of Tehran province	21
2	Head of sales reports deputy	13
3	Deputy of planning and sales	25
4	Manager of marketing and sales	11
5	Marketing and sales expert	14
6	Head of Behran Oil export operations	22
7	Behran Oil export operations deputy	28
8	B2B sales manager	10
9	Market research expert	14
10	Sales operations expert	20
11	Head of Behran Oil financial treasury	18
12	Sales engineering unit	16
13	Sales engineering unit	17
14	Sales operations	12
15	Sales operations	17

At first, the following questions were asked about the background and work experience of the participants.

- I would like to get acquainted with your background and experiences before talking about the main topics under consideration.
- How much do you know about the marketing mix?
- How many years of work experience do you have and what is your educational and work background?

- Have you ever been involved in marketing and specifically planning for a marketing mix?

Then the main questions were asked from the experts:

- Do you think it is possible to plan and implement a marketing mix in Iranian industrial organizations?
- In your opinion, what are the key factors of the marketing mix to be implemented in Behran Company?
- In your opinion, what are the underlying factors for laying the groundwork for the development of an industrial marketing mix?
- What factors do you think play an intervening role in the development of the industrial marketing mix?
- In your opinion, what are the central and causal factors in forming the marketing mix?
- Which of these factors is more effective in improving the marketing mix for Behran Company?
- Which of these factors has the greatest impact on the acceptance of the marketing mix in the field of industry?
- In your opinion, what are the most important results and achievements of the marketing mix in Behran Company?
- What do you think are the barriers to developing a marketing mix?
- Do you have a specific subject that you did not have the opportunity to say in response to the interview questions?

All interviews were conducted face-to face with the attendance of the researcher at Behran Oil Company. Notes were taken during the interview, and all interviews were recorded to cover all of the experts' speeches. The recorded interviews were later played and sufficient information was extracted from them and written in text. These texts were used as basic information for qualitative data analysis (in three coding steps).

The data analysis method was according to the grounded theory approach and done through coding and categorization. The authors extracted and coded the texts from the interviews one by one. Three stages of coding – including open, centralized, and selective – were conducted on the data. To this end, the data were first read line by line, and open codes (which are the words of the participants themselves) were extracted. After directing scientific interviews with scientific and administrative experts within the organization, an integrated marketing mix model based on industrial customer behavior in accordance with the grounded theory method emerged. To document the method, validity, and reliability of the research, a portion of this process is mentioned briefly.

Open Coding

The open coding process started after the interviews. The codes of the interviews carried out with 15 experts and specialists throughout the open coding were extracted. During the next step, these regular codes, as well as the influential codes from the researcher's viewpoint, were recognized as final codes.

Axial Coding

The next analysis step is axial coding. The objective of this level is to set up a relationship between the generated categories (open coding stage). It is done through a schematic model and maintains the theorist to expedite the theoretical process.

In this research, based on the Four-Dimensions Criteria (FDC) model (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), four criteria including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were checked and controlled by the authors.

4. Findings

Causative Conditions

Causative conditions involve those categories that directly influence the integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior. In this research, the three categories of customer-oriented readiness, the improvement of the CRM system, and the codification of the company's brand promotion strategies are empirical agents that can generate causative conditions of an integrated marketing mix (Table 3).

Table 3. Causative Categories (Main, Subcategories)

Main category	Subcategory	Sample concepts extracted from the interviews
Causative conditions	Customer orientation	The existence of mutual relationship between customers and company Suggestions and complaints Active customer communication department Constituting a customer club Informing customers about the company's activities on time Incentive discounts for customers Holding festivals
	Improvement of CRM System	Optimal communication with the customer Customer attraction Customer preservation Customer loyalty Strengthening customer trust
	Improving company brand promotion strategies	Recognizing tangible and intangible advantages Spotting distinct sources Improving assessment indicators Brand cognitive image

Underlying Conditions

Underlying conditions embody a particular set of characteristics associated with the phenomenon that generally refers to the area of related events and incidents. In this study, technology, peripheral factors, and contentious atmosphere are the main contextual factors of the integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior, which are exhibited in Table 4.

Table 4. Underlying Categories (Main, Subcategories)

Main category	Subcategory	Sample concepts extracted from the interviews
Underlying conditions	Technology	Changing technology characteristics Changes in the skills and expertise demanded by the company Changes in the way of providing services Development of technology-oriented models
	Peripheral factors	Economic factors Political factors Social factors
	Contentious atmosphere	The requirement to invest in the quality of products and services Attempts to develop services Market share Contentious advantage

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions include more general conditions such as time, space, and culture that serve as facilitators or limiters of strategies. Three categories of customer status, conceived risk, and customer characteristics are considered in this study as categories of intervening conditions, which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Intervening Categories (Main, Subcategories)

Main category	Subcategory	Sample concepts extracted from the interviews
Intervening conditions	Status of customers	Power of bargaining Inappropriate behaviors of customers Absence of customers commitments
	Conceived risk	Attitude of customers towards services Increasing the reputation of the company's brand Enhancing customer trust in the company
	Customers' characteristics	Customer's knowledge Customer's experience Variations and changes in customer patterns Differences and shifts in decision exemplars

Axial Category

In this research, the three categories of flexibility, branding based on behavior, and customers’ understanding and expectations of services are regarded as axial categories, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Axial Categories (Main, Subcategories)

Main category	Subcategory	Sample concepts extracted from the interviews
Axial category	Flexibility	Swift structure Social media advertisements Organizational learning Effective management
	Branding based on behavior	Branding cut out for the target customers Utilizing public relations to reinforce brand identity Rendering brand services according to social networks Identity making for an industrial brand
	Customers’ understanding and expectations of services	Customers’ expectation from the provider of the services Customers’ understanding of the services Identifying customers’ cognitive images of services Customers’ profound perceptions about costs Customers’ assessment of service quality

Strategies

In fact, strategies are plans and actions that are the output of the model axial category and end in consequences. They are an assemblage of measures taken to handle, manage, or respond to the studied phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, three categories of positioning process assessment, assessing target market selection process, and distribution channel assessment are classified as strategies, as exhibited in Table 7.

Table 7. Category of Strategies (Action/Reaction, Main, Subcategory)

Main category	Subcategory	Sample concepts extracted from the interviews
Strategies	Positioning process assessment	The strategy of positioning in relation to brand Determining the relationship of product peculiarities with the target market Assessing discrete criteria Promoting the position in the minds of customers
	Assessing target market selection process	Behavioral aspects of diverse market sections The strategy of determining the target market Comprehensive and systematic assessments of target strengths and weaknesses
	Distribution channel assessment	Explaining customer segmentation Explaining remote (not personally) distribution channels Explaining the available communication channels Recognizing and picking distributors

Consequences

Consequences are much like the products or outcomes of actions and reactions. The consequences are classified into three pieces of contentious advantage, value creation, and the codification of a practical strategy as the implications of an integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior. Table 8 shows the categories and concepts of consequences.

As a whole, our results imply that a combination of causative agents (customer orientation, improvement of CRM system, improving company brand promotion strategies) and contextual factors (namely technology, peripheral factors, and contentious atmosphere) must be provided as the basis for industrial marketing mix. Meanwhile, customer status, conceived risk, and customer characteristics may intervene with the progress of the firm in successful implementation of marketing strategies. Positioning process assessment, assessing target market selection process, and distribution channel assessment were identified as critical strategies for successful affairs in the context of industrial marketing. If the firm succeeds in development and implementation of marketing mix, it may achieve outputs such as encouraging potential customers, maintaining long-term relationships, profitability, enhanced perceived value, etc.

Table 8. Consequences Category (Main, Subcategory)

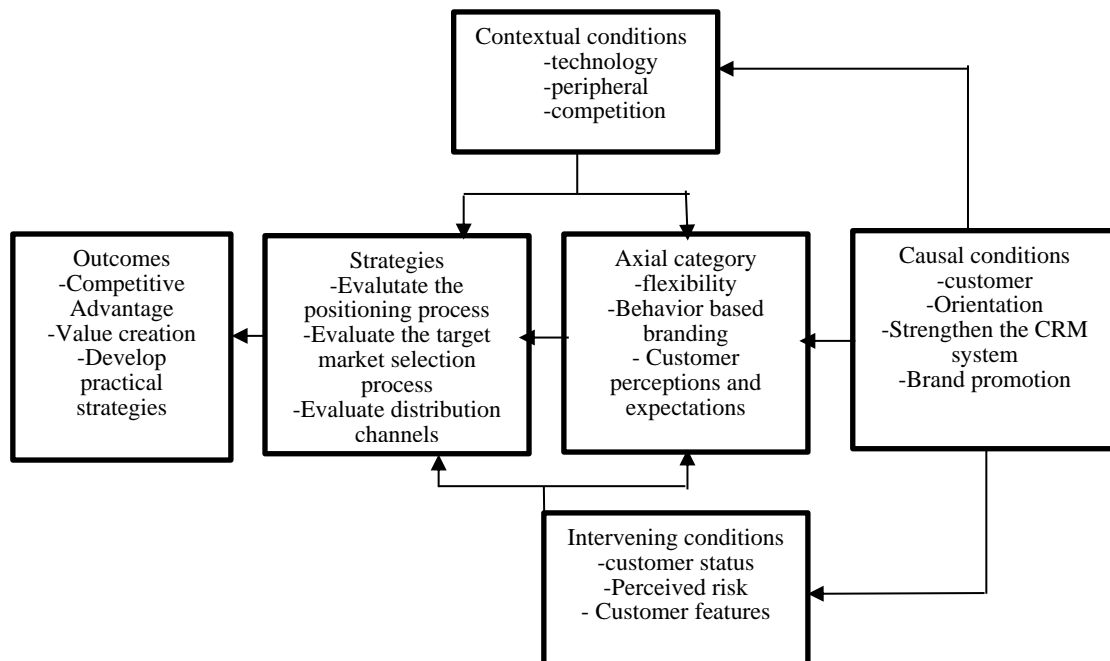
Main category	Subcategory	Sample concepts extracted from the interviews
Consequences	Contentious advantage	Encouraging potential customers Maintaining long-term relationships Determining long-term position Profitability
	Value creation	Creating valuable assets Promoting optimal replication Enhancing perceived value Preventing customer diversion Accessing services easily Identifying the influencing factors from the customers' viewpoint Providing administrative solutions
	Codification of a practical strategy	Recognizing strengths and weaknesses Making a distinction Presenting distinct distribution channels

Determining the Theoretical Model Validity

The theory's validity was analyzed concerning the appropriateness and practicality indicators (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Moreover, the outlooks of the interviewees were reviewed in this regard. On the other hand, the appropriateness index was discussed with three interviewees. To this end, discussions were made about the proportionality of the study findings with the empirical world, and regarding the nomination, some corrections were made in several categories. Besides, concerning the applicability index, the data was constantly compared with the background and theoretical foundations of the study. In this respect, the codification of semi-structured questions in any step of the interviews should cover the applicability of the desired study by eliminating the problems from them.

Paradigm Model

According to the model of Strauss and Corbin (1990), the paradigm model of this research was designed. Explaining the factors causing this issue has also been the prime interest of this study. The paradigm model of the study is displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** The Paradigm Model of the Research

5. Discussion

This study aimed to present an integrated marketing mix model based on industrial customer behavior using grounded theory. The final model achieved displays that in the service industry, a holistic outlook and consideration of multiple slants of the marketing mix is essential concerning the causative, contextual, and intervening conditions. The outcomes of the study comprise the presentation of causative factors, contexts, intervening factors, axial categories, consequences, and strategies to improve an integrated marketing mix model based on industrial customer behavior, which is rendered in the final research model. Unlike the distinguished models, this one is not restricted to an integrated marketing mix, and it also encompasses attitudes correlated with industrial customer behavior. Moreover, the research model does not inflict any definite constraints on the types of integrated marketing mixes that may be designated in the future study.

The findings of this research will be beneficial for policymakers in the public, non-governmental, and private sections to recognize indicators and plan to present an appropriate platform for the growth of an integrated marketing mix. Furthermore, due to the absence of a comprehensive study in the realm of an integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior in Iran, the findings of this study are estimated as a potent starting period for future research in this domain. Any study in the scope of an integrated marketing mix based on industrial customer behavior similar to this research is an effort to make a contribution to the research literature in this area. Integrated marketing mix advancement generates a promising path for the growth of industrial customer behavior. Besides, it can influence industrial companies at numerous levels. Other authors have pointed out the importance of marketing mix in industrial marketing (Kerr & Patti, 2015; Niazi et al., 2021; Thanabordeekij & Syers, 2020).

Additionally, the study results accord with those reported by Bazhan et al. (2018), which reveal that through integrated marketing strategies with availability and field data, a change in consumer marketing is formed, and this leads to more function of efficiency expansion. The findings of Chou et al. (2020) designate that the marketing mix and consumer behavior are intricate and indivisible issues, and their role in industrial marketing has been affirmed. Therefore, the outcomes of the study demand an approach that must obtain and use the marketing mix information. The findings of Rastegaripour et al. (2019) attest that they should do more propitious planning for the evolution of a novel integrated marketing strategy. Therefore, our results may be considered as a response to this call for further research in the field of industrial marketing mix.

According to consumer-based marketing mix, the marketing and sales department should establish constant communication with wholesalers, customers, distribution and delivery channels, and other market participants to distinguish the suitable time to confer the commodity to the market. Delays in the introduction of the new product to the market can possibly lead to losing meaningful opportunities, and the commodity entering the market too soon may not be well accepted by customers, distribution channels, and other participants of the market (Wu & Li, 2018). Under current competitive atmosphere, to enhance the development of brand promotion strategies, managers should pay attention to the mixed capabilities of marketing. In this respect, they should develop their marketing information. This is feasible through a well-codified and perfect marketing plan (Massicotte & Henri, 2020). The next step after developing a marketing plan and performing it in principle over some time is to consistently examine the internal and external situation in which the company is located, and continuously assess the environment, and eventually promote new products higher than competitors. To be active in today's extremely contentious area, examining and improving brand strategies is incredibly important and is vital for the advancement of company branding (Nenonen et al., 2019).

Regarding the enormity of domestic and foreign markets, establishing an effective information system in the realm of the domestic and foreign market's attractiveness of this type of product are the fundamental necessities of the export improvement strategy. Therefore, by building a comprehensive system to evaluate the attractiveness of international markets and inform internal institutions, the company can make a meaningful contribution to steering institutions to dynamic competition to take advantage of domestic benefits in line with developing the company's brand (Shankar & Chin, 2011). Managers should be conscious of the significance of contentious opportunities in the market, and employees should acquire the required training in this concern because they are in direct contact with

customers. Thus, they are efficacious in recognizing customer needs and proposing better services to the company.

In general, the results obtained in this study are consistent with those reported by other authors (in individual studies). For example, in the proposed model of the present paper, customer orientation and customer relationship management are considered as causal factors, which is consistent with the results obtained by Nenonen et al. (2019) and Pomeroy (2017). Other components of our proposed model, including competition, international marketing, and technology, are consistent with the findings of other authors. For example, Thanabordeekij and Syers (2020) point out the importance of using technology in the development of marketing mix. Wu & Li . (2018) also reported that the marketing mix should have a global orientation, which is consistent with the results of the present study. In line with our findings, other authors have previously cited positioning and distribution channels as effective strategies for marketing mix (Ameyibor et al., 2021; Cortez et al., 2021). Some previous research has also pointed to the perceived risk as a deterrent to the development of marketing mix (Granmayeh & Granmayeh, 2019), which is consistent with the findings of the present study.

One of the important points of this research is presenting a model related to B2B business. In contrast to B2C marketing mix models, which often include product, price, promotion, and place, the model presented in this research presents the fundamental factors affecting the industrial marketing mix. As the research findings show, the B2B marketing mix model differs from the B2C business (although some similarities are found). For example, bargaining power was identified as one of the intervening indicators that applies to B2B. On the other hand, in relation to causal conditions, the holding of festivals was identified as an indicator, which is very important in the development of business-to-business relations. Evaluation of distribution channels was also identified as one of the important strategies for forming a marketing mix, which is of great importance in B2B business. However, overlaps between B2B and B2C businesses should not be overlooked.

6. Conclusion

Due to the increased competition in industrial fields, including oil and petrochemical products, a new model of marketing mix was developed based on industrial customer behavior in petrochemical products. This research is one of the first domestic studies in Iran that presents a comprehensive and completely novel model in the field of industrial marketing mix with a qualitative approach. The use of grounded theory made it possible to develop a comprehensive and detailed model in the field of oil and petrochemicals. This research not only contributes to the enrichment of the literature on the industrial marketing mix, but also has managerial implications that help managers of oil and petrochemical companies to formulate and implement effective marketing strategies. It is recommended to other researchers to recognize and prioritize integrated marketing mix components based on industrial customer behavior employing the Fuzzy Delphi technique. Moreover, the impacts of brand-consumer relationships on notions with suitable semantic intercourse can be weighed. This research is based on the views of petrochemical experts and therefore caution should be exercised in generalizing the results. The use of crisp numbers can also be considered as another limitation of this research.

The main contribution of this paper is presenting a novel model for B2B context that is different from the conventional 4Ps model. Given the scarcity of B2B-specific marketing mix models, this article provides new insights for researchers and academics. The contribution of the article lies in the introduction of new variables influencing effectiveness of industrial marketing, which can open new windows in the field of industrial marketing studies. From a practical point of view, this article introduces components that managers of Behran Company (and other companies involved in the oil and petrochemical industry) can use to formulate and implement marketing strategies. The specific features of industrial marketing (which distinguishes it from conventional B2C strategies) highlight the importance of the present study.

Given the current problems of Iran's oil industry (international sanctions, the existence of strong competitors in the Middle East, etc.), the proposed model can be used as an enabler tool to improve the competitiveness of Iranian oil companies. Since this research is based on the views of experts and marketing practitioners of companies producing petroleum products, the results are very consistent with the real market conditions. On the other hand, due to the scarcity of industrial marketing mix models, the results obtained in this study provide new insights to other researchers to design B2B

marketing mix models. The authors of this article hope that the present study pave the way for further research on industrial marketing - especially in oil companies.

The results of this study may have practical implications for the managers of industrial companies. Since marketing affairs represent an everyday activity of the oil companies, practitioners can use the findings of the present study for attracting new customers or strengthening their relations with industrial customers. Given the problems that Iranian industrial companies face (sanctions, exchange rate fluctuations, inflation, etc.) the proposed model in this study helps them have better marketing performance. Specifically, oil and petrochemical companies facing strong foreign competitors can use the model proposed in this research as a roadmap for developing marketing strategies in regional and international markets. Moreover, the managers of marketing departments in industrial companies can use the strategies proposed in this research to improve the brand position, gain more customers, and ultimately improve the company's profitability. Finally, it should be noted that this study, like any other research, had its limitations. The proposed model of this research has been obtained only via qualitative method and has not been validated by survey methods. This could be a topic for future research. On the other hand, this research has been done only in the field of petroleum and petrochemical products; therefore, more caution should be exercised in extending its results to other industrial markets.

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