The purpose of this paper is to explain the growing importance and significance of petrol stations as channels for expanding retail services. As the popularity of petrol stations as a form of retail has been growing over the years, and due to the changed patterns of consumer behaviour, petrol stations are gaining the importance as channels for expansion of additional retail services, such as fast moving consumer goods shopping and fresh corners. The paper elaborates on the significance of retail at petrol stations, with focus on success factors of petrol stations, the importance of customer satisfaction, education and training of employees, technology advancement. We then illustrate and explain the development of traditional fuel retail at petrol stations with the trend of lowering costs through self-service and self-payment of the fuel, as well as with the differentiation of services. Our study focuses on the overview of the existing research on the importance of petrol stations and petrol retailing, with the conclusion that this niche of the research area is still quite an under-researched topic.

Key words: petrol retailing, petrol stations, retail services, fast moving consumer goods, fresh corner.
1. INTRODUCTION

The popularity of petrol stations as a form of retail has been growing over the years. The development of retail outside the retail stores and the campaign to gain customers on the market is very difficult due to fierce competition in the form of other retail channels. According to the Ordinance on classification of shops and other retail units (NN 39/09), a petrol station is a retail unit whose basic activity is selling oil derivatives, and, at specially designated points, selling gas in gas bottles and selling car parts. The Ordinance also defines a shop at a petrol station as a specially furnished smaller retail unit, located at a petrol station, where various assortments of products in original packaging are offered.

Petrol stations are becoming more competitive for longer working hours, more products they offer and quick charge. In order for petrol stations retails to be successful, the influence of numerous factors on their business has to be monitored continually. Therefore, an efficient strategy plays the extremely important role there based on additional services as the ground for attracting customers. By determining competitive strategy, the speed of the response to trends is increased, and their influence, products and services are adapted to the demand and market conditions. The growing demands of the customers and the changes in the way of living result in the changes in retail. By offering additional products, the customers who create the habit and, over time, the desire for new products, are attracted.

The retail outside the shops has been growing with the increase in the number of petrol stations, and then, with the expansion of the supply and additional services. The growing number of petrol stations is observed from the aspect of big companies that take over the smaller ones and therewith expand and increase the number of petrol stations. The last big move has resulted in the introduction of a new assortment and the change of the layout. Petrol stations are no longer directed at the retail of oil derivatives and basic services connected to the automobiles maintenance, as they were before. Retail units, which have coffee shops and terraces alongside the classical store at a petrol station, now offer a wide choice of fresh produce and warm and refreshing beverages. Technological development and following trends are the core characteristics crucial for the improvement of business activities, along with the continuous education of the employees, creation of organizational culture for better communication with the customers and of positive shopping experience.

The paper is structured as follows: in the next section we explain the significance of retail at petrol stations. Afterwards, the development of retail at petrol stations is explained, together with the new trends of retail development at petrol stations and the development perspective of small petrol stations. The core of the paper is the overview of existing research on the importance of petrol stations and petrol retailing. The paper ends with conclusion.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RETAIL AT PETROL STATIONS

2.1. Factors of successful business activities at petrol stations

The ever-increasing life dynamics, less and less time available, growing diversification of the consumers' needs, and more investments in the information systems and technologies, have had a strong impact on the retail sector (Brtić-Stipčević and Renko, 2007). Over the last years, petrol stations have been expanding their assortments of products and services, besides selling oil derivatives. Innovations are becoming the key components of all marketing variables in trade in general. The point is, principally, in the further innovations of the products and services assortments, promotional activities, and in the detection of new locations, presentations, settings etc. (Segetlija, 2011).

A shop at a petrol station is in the ripe phase of its life cycle. It operates in the environment that
changes quickly and is filled with threats as well as opportunities. In order to be successful, the companies dealing with oil derivatives retail have to carefully choose the targeted segments and position themselves firmly. Customers’ loyalty programs, like loyalty cards and other concepts of providing services, influence the capability of a society to win over and keep the customer. The intention of a company is to create and keep satisfied and profitable customers. Every company has its ways and tools for achieving successful business dealings, massing and keeping satisfied customers, for having an organizational culture which will stimulate employees to work in a way that is recognizable to customers and that will motivate them to shop again. By advancing technology and using tools for monitoring the satisfaction of the customers with the products the company offers, a higher level of efficiency aimed at achieving the desired success on the market is achieved. Retail development leads to the increase in the desires and needs of the customers, and therein, to the improvement of the provided service, which becomes an important factor while the purchase is being performed.

Sales assistants at petrol stations, alongside the knowledge connected with the selling of basic products, oil derivatives, have to possess considerable knowledge on retail sales at a petrol station, and necessary communication skills for relations and communication with the customers who frequent the place. Besides basic training programs that have until now been important for the work at a petrol station, the introduction of new assortments means additional training of the employees to better service the customers and communicate with them while they are provided with a service at the station. By creating positive atmosphere and organizational culture, a higher level of relationship with the customers is achieved, which can influence their decision on the repeated purchase and the choice of a retail place. The acceptance of the requirements made by the customers and the development of good relations stimulate the creation of unique and long-term relations. The leading role in the training of the employees holds the manager who motivates them. The manager has to ensure that employees know their products and that they have trust in those products value. The technologies in the store are necessary for the completion of its function and for meeting the demands of the chosen market segments. For every business subject, a petrol station likewise, it is of great importance to follow technological trends which facilitate, improve and accelerate business activities (Segetlija et al., 2011).

The entrance of new companies, as well as the consolidation of the existing companies on the market, undoubtedly influence the reduction in the number of small petrol stations, while at the same time, impact their competitiveness and sustainability on the market. It can be concluded that large petrol stations expand their business by taking over smaller stations, and the competitive advantage is achieved with the offer of additional products and contents. The differentiation among the petrol stations is set by the products which are not oil products, as well as by additional services provided, and one of the important advantages of the petrol stations are catering facilities at the petrol stations, and the service of parking while doing shopping. Besides that, they offer freshly prepared foods, desserts and a wide choice of different coffee flavours, like the petrol stations in the developed countries in Europe and America. If a petrol station offers a catering facility, then it is a resting point, and if it has enough parking spaces and a shop, then the customers see it as a mini-market, and not just as a place for selling oil derivatives (Vaško, 2012).

By broadening the assortment in the developed countries of Europe, the customers create a habit of buying fresh produce, coffee and other beverages at petrol stations while refuelling or on the way to work. Moreover, a petrol station with all the available products, substitutes other retail forms, and the basic advantage is the speed of the service. Thereby, the population creates the habit of a quick living and dieting. The times are changing fast, so in the Croatian markets as well; oil companies are increasingly investing in their facilities, expanding retail capacities, opening catering facilities, car-washes and other additional contents.
Throughout the world, there are trends of large retail chains strongly entering the oil derivatives market which is complementary to their basic activity, because, in that way, they provide additional value and more reason to purchase in their facilities, while refuelling the tank. European trends say that fuel is no longer the key driver; rather, it is the selling of products in the shops and fast food service (Ja trgovac, 2016).

There have been many changes in retail relating to international expansion of the chains, optimizations of retail units and information technology. With the possibility of using the applications on smart phones for checking the best fuel prices on the market and according to the location, and Facebook pages which have become unavoidable today, better availability and information on the business dealings and products offered is achieved. Besides, with the advancement of technology and more rapid pace, consumers are prone to shop quickly, which makes a petrol station an ideal retail form. The prices which slightly differ from other retail forms become less important. One of the reasons is the educated modern society with higher living standard, and the other is the popular way of living distinctive of the western society.

2.2 Customers satisfaction

Measurements of customers’ satisfaction, i.e. the consumers, are the key criteria for quality. Based on the feedback, the index of consumers satisfaction is calculated, which can show the problems in the area of quality before they begin to negatively influence the business results. A profitable customer is the one who generates income to the trader, and who with frequent purchases surpasses the costs generated by attracting, selling and servicing the customer. The customers are attracted and kept by satisfying their needs. The customers who are satisfied with the service not only will come back to the petrol station, but will also give others positive feedback on their satisfaction. A company’s gain which is made by the purchase should be seen as the result of good business practice and not as the sole purpose of the company (Dunković, 2015).

Every company should build their own access to the customers’ satisfaction. The satisfaction has to be provided at every interaction with the customers. In that way, customers get the feeling of loyalty, satisfaction certainly motivates and influences the repeated purchase of a specific product and service. More satisfied customers create more profit. That is why it is necessary to create a basis of satisfied customers. The challenge of creating the complete customers satisfaction is in the creation of a company’s culture where all its members strive to achieve customers’ satisfaction. Satisfaction can be revealed and measured via a system of complaints and suggestions, questionnaires on the customers satisfaction (it is important for establishing intention for repeated purchase), mystery shopping (evaluates the service, which can be conducted by the managers as well), analysis of the lost customers (how many and why they lose the customers).

With the aim to satisfy their customers, Tifon petrol stations in the Republic of Croatia have initiated the development and improvement of their services, and the enlargement of their assortment, following the example of other countries in Western Europe and America, where this form of sales has been present for the last fifty years. In America, like in many Western European countries, a customer can do the entire shopping at a petrol station, including having a coffee and lunch, and buying consumer products like sugar, salt and flour. The goal is, along the tank refuelling, to provide the customers with the place where they can shop for consumer goods, where they can take a break from driving, wash their vehicles etc. By introducing additional contents, they want to provide more satisfaction and give the possibility to choose a specific petrol station, not only for oil derivatives prices, but for additional services the petrol station provides as well. Since work and life habits have been increasing the life
dynamics, this form of a petrol station, which provides the experience of the entire shopping at one place, gives the opportunity of fast and available services at one place, without wasting a lot of time.

Some American car retailers offer special services to their customers, many of whom are very surprised by them. When they buy a new vehicle, shops can promise free oil change during the cars life span, free towing service, free inspections, free car wash and the guarantee for the replacement of broken or defective parts as long as they possess the car, all without additional payments. The price of the vehicle is not too high in order to cover for the costs, but they see providing of the service as the cost of business, and more importantly, as the cost of winning customers loyalty. The profit grew by 10% in 2015, and the company has continued to expand. This has also stimulated the customers to service their cars at the authorized service, which they were reluctant to do before. Besides, they have begun to offer free beauty treatments on Wednesdays in all the shops, and after that, free male haircuts. In this way, the customers have created relationships with the retailers and the service providers (Chappell, 2016).

2.3. Education and training of the employees

For the successfullness of the retail, most attention is given to constant education and training of the employees – salespersons. They are the mirrors and the first contact a customer makes with a company. The behaviour of the sales staff towards the customers, and the relation of the manager with other employees represent one of the key components of the company's differentiation, which directly influence the final result – profit/loss. While the companies face not only local, but global competition as well, sales staff and managers should not just provide best service or product, but should also focus on the customers’ satisfaction in order to boost their competitiveness (Butigan, 2012).

The education of the salespersons is very demanding, because the working cycles of 24 hours at petrol stations are diverse and complicated and are subject to many regulations. In order to respond to all the demands, the education of the employees is given a lot of thought. Salespersons become advisors during the shopping of certain goods and they help satisfy needs and wishes of the customers. Salespersons have to possess formed characteristics in order to have certain competences for sales role: capability, expertise, theoretical and practical knowledge and other traits, and be familiar with the dangers and the measures of precaution, i.e. safety at the work place (Poljak Radović, 2005).

Salespersons at petrol stations, alongside the knowledge related to the selling of the basic product, oil derivatives, have to possess great knowledge of selling in retail at a petrol station and the necessary communication skills for relations and communication with the customers. Besides the basic training programs and education that have until now been significant for working at a petrol station, by introducing the Fresh Corner, it is crucial to additionally direct the employees for the servicing the customers while they are making the purchase.

With creating positive atmosphere and organizational culture, a higher level of relationship with the customers is achieved, which can influence their decision on the repeated purchase and the choice of the retail place. Accepting the demands made by the customers and developing good relations stimulates the development of unique and permanent relations. The leading role in the training of the employees holds the manager who motivates them for work. The managers have to be sure that the employees know their products and believe in their value. It is crucial that the managers understand the marketing, and the orientation towards the customers is important.

When people think about marketing, then they usually think of the efforts directed on the outside, towards the market, but the true marketing efforts should be directed on the inside, towards the
employees. The outside marketing will draw customers, but will not achieve much if the employees do not perform as customers expect them to. Service provided by the employees is what brings the customers back (Kotler et al., 2010). As the inability to find the employees with the right skills, at the right place and at the right time, becomes an acute problem, following the drop in the world’s economy, companies are risking to be left without skills necessary for performing their business strategy. The key is to recognize the employees who can be additionally trained and educated. The development and education are one of the key incentives of higher productivity of the employees and they build capabilities which can be used in the organization. Competent and capable employees are key factors for achieving success of any company operating in the oil and gas industry.

2.4. The advancement of technology

At petrol stations, this segment can be more expressed, so they, with top technology for selling oil derivatives, have to have standards which are specific to retail. Neglecting this part of business activity bears its consequences. Today, shops at petrol stations are mostly equipped with all the technology specific to typical shops. These shops offer everything classic shops do, and they follow all the technological trends. Scientific and technological advancement influence the development of trade as an economic branch in two ways; on the one hand, they increase the productivity in itself and on the other, they change the setting of the store, thereby enabling the inclusion of the store in the modern trends. The technologies in trade are necessary in order to fulfil its functions and to satisfy the needs of the selected market segments. For every business subject, petrol stations included, it is extremely important to follow technological trends that facilitate, improve and accelerate the business dealings. Technological trends change quickly and there are often examples of those who do not react to changes on time and lose the market, profit etc. (Segetić et al., 2011).

The changes are evident, not just in the information and communication sector, but in the sphere of production and consumption. Moreover, the progress is evident in the modernization of the buildings. Technology is the most important factor of the future development of the trade, because only with the development of the technology, trading functions can be further developed. New information technologies contribute to lowering of the transactional costs. By entering the global and the European oil derivatives market, petrol stations in Croatia are compelled to change and modernize and in that way comply with the developed world (Brajičić, 1994).

Every new technology changes the needs, habits, people’s behaviour, dissolves old and creates new needs and interests, Technology directly influences the process of decision-making on doing the shopping. In the today’s environment, in global conditions, innovations and knowledge become the basis for development and the key factors of a society. Today, the progress is possible for only those who value knowledge and innovations. Main characteristic of today’s business activities in the global world is the development of the economy of knowledge. One of the key characteristic of the economy of knowledge is the development of information and communication technologies. Without the use of information and communication technologies one cannot be competitive, successful and efficient on the global market. Important role in this domain especially holds the emergence and development of the Internet and online marketing.

Innovations can be explained as the process of development of solutions in the form of a physical product or a service which gives the consumers new value. It begins with the identification, choice of the customers and the market, including the identification of possibility, and ends up when the desired outcome is achieved (Ulwick, 2005). Organizations exist because of the buyers, and not vice versa. Therefore, recognition and understanding of the needs and desires of the customers to upgrade their experience should be the focal point of a successful organization.
3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF RETAIL AT PETROL STATIONS

3.1. The trends of retail development at petrol stations

In the development of traditional fuel retail at petrol stations, two significant trends are evident:

1) Lowering of costs through self-service and self-payment of the fuel, petrol stations with pay at the pump service, which provide the service outside the working hours, and the lowest costs have those petrol stations without sales assistants, which only have pay at the pump service, without shops, but provide selling of the fuel 24 hours a day even at less attractive locations;

2) Rise of the income and profit of petrol stations with the differentiation of the supply of the final production products, fast food and beverages and with providing services. Although the shop assistants are necessary, the profit is higher than the costs.

Today, the development of retail of consumer goods at petrol stations in the most part of the European market has reached great lunch. Companies with their own network of petrol stations can now compete not only with the traditional competition, but also with the new, strong competitors, like supermarkets and hypermarkets. Oil companies are no longer just wholesalers, but are strongly involved in all the aspects of retail. They are investing more time and money in the creation of the effective consumer offers and this effort must pay off. Now, they see the inclusion of their petrol stations in retail as a condition for long-term survival. With the ever-growing emphasis on the activities of the sales, final consumption and the supply of the goods, this becomes even more important.

The competition does not arise among the products petrol stations offer, but among that which oil companies in the network of petrol stations add to their products in the form of services, advertising, customer assistance, financial aid, delivery, and other forms of attention and affability customers appreciate. Today, customers need to be provided with something more than the guaranteed product quality, which is important because in that way, common goods transfer onto the level of special products. Whether a certain product will enjoy trust by the customers and eliminate any insecurity during the purchase or not, is up to additional services and the experts skills in retail. Today, it can be foreseen that the share of the service included in the price of the product will continually grow, alongside the growth of the population standard, where one of the most important factors for the product sale will be the time factor in the sense of time-saving and using it for other purposes. Modern trade develops in the technical and technological sense, as well as in the organizational sense. These developments are preconditions by the factors in the trade environment (Segetić et al., 2011).

All the factors which influence the changes and the development of the trade are the factors from its environment, and they relate to:

- a) Scientific achievements and technical and technological progress
- b) Demographic and social movements
- c) Changes in the personal and social standard
- d) Variability of market structure and market mechanisms
- e) Changes in the socio-economic system and economic policy

Demographic and social factors of the trade development relate to the population as the bearer of all the needs of the final consumption. Besides the total number of the population, its structure, the relation between the agricultural and non-agricultural population, urban and rural population, urbanized and non-urbanized population is also important. With the change in the educational structure, habits,
occupations, life style, comes the change in the structure of the consumption. It is mostly the case of
the growth of income, and therein, the life standard. A special focal point is the age structure of the
population. For the trade, the most interesting is the age group between 20 and 35, because then most
people marry, form families, build, furnish their homes etc.

The level of mobility of the population is an important indicator of the demand in retail. The mobility
relates to the migration from the country to towns and cities, populating new areas because of the
employment in the specific industry or business areas, commute, tourist and other type of travel. The
scope and the structure of the final consumption are also influenced by the level of education. Normally,
higher level of education means higher personal standard, better taste etc.

In America, an owner of a petrol station has significantly changed the form of sales. He opened the first
petrol station a hundred years ago, and it has changed completely until today. When the first station
was opened, the price was only 27 cents a gallon, despite the inflation which was 6.39 $ a gallon in
today’s dollars; today he owns more than 152 thousand petrol stations all over the country, and 80%
are the shops which profit most from selling food and beverages (Arnold, 2013).

Petrol stations look more and more like supermarkets. Every driver buys fuel, and then some other
products, like a sandwich or a newspaper. The locals also use these stores to buy important products,
like bread and milk. A completely furnished petrol station with hot food and hundreds of different
beverages does not look like the first modern station which first time appeared a century ago. After
those simple fuel stations, many stations were a combination of pumps with car gas and car service.
Back then, the employees tanked gas, checked the glass liquid and charged for the fuel. Fifty years
later, he still had a half of petrol stations dedicated to the full service for the cars. Until the 1960s, in
America, there was the standard that employees provide tank fuelling service. In the 70s, this trend was
abandoned, and self-service was introduced, which lowered the need for employees and thereby,
lowered the costs.

At other stations in the country, the trend of providing tank refuelling service was continued. Every
station had its own way to hold back the competition. Beside the station, there was a garage, where
additional services for cars could be provided. The owner knew all the customers by their name and this
was a special service. After that, there appeared the trend of selling fast food and beverages at the
petrol stations. This model has expanded till today. The company sells millions of gallons of fuel
annually, and also tries to compete with the shops and catering businesses. In their assortment today,
they offer coffee, tea, barbecue, cold beverages and thousands of non-alcoholic drinks (Arnold, 2013).

During the 1980s and the 1990s, there existed two main movements in the retail of Great Britain. The
first one was that the growing number of retailers who organized their geographically dispersed stations
as franchise systems. It is estimated that, until 1997, about 19% of the retail in Great Britain was
realized through franchise retail stores. The other reason was that a large number of retail chains,
including Boots, Sainsbury, IKEA, Body Shop, Next, Benetton and Tesco were becoming more and
more recognized as strong brands. The strength of a brand results in added value and therein
increases competitive advantage of the organizations in question. The simultaneous emergence of
these two developing situations led to the fact that a series of retail chains tried to build their
organizations into strong brands by renaming their retail places and introducing business formats as
franchises for their management. There was the Shell Retail as well, a business unit of the oil giant
Royal Dutch Shell, responsible for the management of the distribution and sales of the Shell motor fuels
in Great Britain.
Over the last quarter of the century, a significant social change in Great Britain has stimulated a radical move in the structure and the pattern of the food trade. First, the rise of the life standard has led to the increased number of people owning cars, which has made the profitability of retail on the British production lines easier. The results of the research also suggest that the lack of time is the key factor for the increase of consumption in the food stores, because women have less time for cooking and household managing. Thus, retail at petrol stations has experienced a revolution, by expanding their small petrol stations into food stores.

Since the early 1980s, more and more petrol stations have transformed into stores. Self-service stores of 900 square meters offered in their assortments fresh foods and various finished and packaged products, detergents and toiletries. Shell reacted slowly to the changes, until 1991, when it began with the national program of transforming their stations into stores. By going retail, oil companies had to make a transformation from their traditional petrol stations into food stores. Most of them did that by adding the word "Shop" or "Mart" to their petrol brand. Shell Retail still wanted to expand its network by selling gasoline, which remained its business priority. The yellow Shell logo was added the word “Select” as the label for the store. The chain has accomplished great success and has become not only the fifth largest news agent in Great Britain, but the fifth largest sandwich retail (Boyle, 2002).

3.2. The development perspective of small petrol stations

Building of new retail units, the growth and the development of the existing ones and the entrance of new players into the market has been the trend in the last years on the oil industry market. The expansion of the existing large companies which spread their business by buying small petrol stations is also not negligible. Considering that there is a big struggle for winning over the customers, the companies with a smaller market share have to invest a lot more effort in the further development and progress. The adjustment speed, lower development costs, information availability and quality sales service are just some of the elements which are likely to influence the competitiveness and the survival of single subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the company</th>
<th>Number of petrol stations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LARGE</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INA</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMW</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETROL</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIFON</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUKOIL</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMALL</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>597</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Daraboš and Polić (2014)

In the period from the year 2000 to 2010, there was a significant rise of the number of petrol stations in the Republic of Croatia. It is evident in Table 1 that there was a change in the number of petrol stations of small companies in relation to large ones. The number of petrol stations of large companies increased by 51% while the medium-sized by 50%. On the other hand, the number of petrol stations
owned by small companies decreased by 22%. The rise of the number of petrol stations owned by big and medium companies is connected with the drop of the number of small companies, because it is mainly the fact of their expansion and taking over the existing petrol stations on the market.

Entrance of new companies, as well as consolidation of the existing companies on the market, undoubtedly influence the decrease of the number of small petrol stations, while at the same time, influence their competitiveness and sustainability on the market (Graph 1). According to the presented results, it can be concluded that in the far future, small petrol stations will slowly disappear from the market a few big players will rule. Graph 1 shows that out of 130 petrol stations in 2000, in 2012 there were 95, which is on average drop of 3 stations a year. The linear trend could lead to the conclusion that in the year 2042, there will be no small petrol station left. Government can influence the survival of small petrol stations with its stimulations through favourable loans for modernization and employment subventions.

Graph 1: Display of the decrease of the number of small petrol stations in the period from 2000 to 2012

Source: Daraboš and Polić (2014)

4. THE OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PETROL STATIONS AND PETROL RETAILING

Daraboš and Polić (2014) conducted research on the perspectives of the survival of small petrol stations in the Republic of Croatia. The purpose of the research was to find key factors which influence the survival of small petrol stations. The key factors that were analysed in the research relate to the entrance of new competitors onto the market, the influence of the Government on the market competition and the influence of the location on the development and sustainability of small petrol stations. The data on the movement of the number of petrol stations over the observed period were collected, and they wanted to establish whether there is a possibility for the survival of small petrol stations in the middle of the economic crisis, the liberalization of the market and many other
unpredictable factors in the domestic and, especially foreign environment, and, besides, the competition is constantly entering Croatian market by taking over small petrol stations. The state undoubtedly takes measures for improvement of competitiveness and business success of big companies, while small stations are often left alone. The location of a petrol station can have crucial influence on the business. The results show that small petrol stations have no perspective for the survival on the market, especially because of the environment, and there is a big gap between the small and the big, where the small will hardly survive.

Daidžić (2015) researched the impulsiveness of consumer products shopping at the AG TRADE j.d.o.o. petrol station in Slavonski Brod. 200 respondents participated in the research. It has shown that the buyers at petrol stations are prone to impulsively buy, under the influence of various factors, but they will not characterize themselves as frequent impulsive buyers, which means that they buy unplanned more often than they think they do. The results have shown that there is no significant difference between the genders in impulsive buying at petrol stations, i.e. that men and women equally often buy unplanned, but there is a difference in other socio-demographic characteristics, especially with age groups, i.e. persons till the age of 35 are more prone to impulsive buying than those older than 35. Working hours of a petrol station is the only statement with which most respondents agreed that it stimulates impulsive buying at petrol stations, and that they have impulsively bought something in the highest percentage in relation to other statements.

Boyle (2002) conducted a research on the failure of the Shell petrol stations. As the features of petrol stations began to change, Shell was the only one to claim that the profitability of those stores was lower than anticipated. Petrol stations faced two great challenges for their business since the 1970s. First, in 1974, the Tesco supermarket chain started selling petrol cheaper than the petrol retailers. Other supermarkets soon began to copy Tesco. Second, the government of Great Britain increased taxes on petrol, so that in 2000, the taxes were 75% of the costs of a gallon of petrol. Oil companies reacted by asking for other possibilities for creating money. Shells competitors started to open shops at the petrol stations in the 1980s, headed by the BP in 1983. Shell, however, did not start transforming petrol stations into shops until 1991, when it used a franchise as the business format. The reality was somewhat different. In front of the Shell Select brand, the items were redesigned and changed to look bigger, brighter and cleaner. It cost Shell on average 500,000 pounds for a petrol station. The franchises had to pay 32,000 pounds for a contract, plus 40,000 pounds for the initiation. Moreover, they had to pay a significant annual fee. A year after the initiative Shell Select reorganized 300 petrol stations. The sales in those stores increased by 20%, but 51% were already at loss. The franchises fought because of: high franchise implementation costs, lower than expected sales volume, the effects of recession in Great Britain. There were two main issues with the entire concept of the Shell Select: the costs of implementation were too high for the franchises and for Shell Retail, and the increase in profit was simply not enough to cover the costs of the franchises. The Shell competitors were by far better. None of them opted for franchise business. Instead, they changed the names of the shops. They kept their costs far lower than Shell and did not have the same level of annual fees for the franchises. As a result, they were not as dependent on the high profitability rise. Shell continued to reorganize the petrol stations, and until 1997, it transformed 850 stations. This overview is based on the “Failure of franchise business of petrol stations in Great Britain which relates to the reorganization of the Shell Retail petrol stations company”.

5. CONCLUSION

Oil industry finds itself in the ripe phase of its life cycle. Retail on petrol stations is prone to many changes, and it has been a very interesting segment of retail in recent times. Besides the basic offer,
the quality of the fuel, and the location which was crucial for the survival of a petrol station, there have been great changes in the way of conducting business and the struggle for survival on the market, so the companies have focused more on the consumer. Now, petrol stations, besides oil, oil derivatives and car equipment, offer consumer goods in the shops at the petrol stations as well. The number of petrol stations has not been significantly growing over the last years, big companies take over smaller ones which disappear from the markets, and the companies expand by increasing added value for the customer. In their assortment, petrol stations offer freshly prepared foods and various hot and refreshing beverages. In the developed countries, this type of service has existed for quite some time, and it is very well received. The population in the developed countries is used to the availability and consumption of all these products at the petrol stations due to the quick living dynamics.

In their developing phase, with constant adding of the new products and attracting the customers, petrol stations shows good results. A part of the customers still has a habit of drinking coffee at petrol stations, while the younger population takes coffee to go and consume food products offered on deals at promotional prices. The quality of the service is by far the most important component for which the customers choose a petrol station. Alongside service quality, the quality of the petrol, the proximity of the station and the atmosphere are the factors customers have evaluated as very important when choosing a petrol station. In order for petrol stations to operate and further develop successfully, it is crucial to attentively monitor the customers’ behaviour as to satisfy their needs.

REFERENCES

12. Ordinance on classification of shops and other retail units, NN 39/09